WILLIBRORD

Missionary in the Netherlands
691—739

BY

ALEXANDER GRIEVE, D.Phil.

S.P.G.

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WILLIBRORD,
An English missionary in Holland, 691-739.

IN PREPARATION.

WILLEHAD,
An English missionary who worked in Holland and Saxony, 730-789.

WILLIBRORD

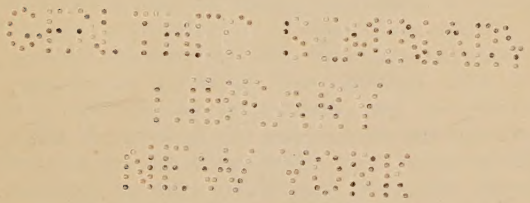
Missionary in the Netherlands, 691-739.

Including a translation of the Vita Willibrordi by Alcuin of York.

BY

The Rev. ALEXANDER GRIEVE, D.Phil.

OF GREYFRIARS CHURCH, GLASGOW.



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Introduction to Series

The series entitled " Lives of Early and Mediæval Missionaries " is designed to include the lives of the best known pioneer missionaries to whose labours the conversion of Europe to the Christian faith was due. Within recent years biographies of a large number of modern missionaries have been published, but, with hardly an exception, no attempt has been made to provide English readers with biographical sketches of the missionaries who worked in Europe between the fourth and the twelfth centuries. This fact is the more surprising, inasmuch as, in many cases, biographies exist which were written by contemporaries and which, though they were not written from a modern critical standpoint, nevertheless enable us to apprehend the conditions under which the Gospel was first preached to the various nations of Europe, while at the same time they throw light upon the missionary problems which their successors in the Mission Field of to-day are called upon to solve.

It is proposed that the biographies issued in this series should consist of translations of the earliest existing lives of the selected missionaries with introductions which will enable readers to appreciate the historical value to be attached to the original biographies, and the conditions under which the work of the missionaries was undertaken.

References are not infrequently made to the hardships which missionaries were called upon to endure, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, a century which witnessed a great expansion of missionary activity ; but we are apt to forget the perils, the hardships and the discouragements which constituted the normal experience of their predecessors. These earlier missionaries threaded their way through trackless forests, braved starvation and want amidst hostile tribes, were persecuted, tormented and oppressed : nevertheless their faith failed not, and, though

the Churches which they helped to establish and the Christian communities which they created were sometimes destroyed as the result of wars and political convulsions, they bequeathed to us as an imperishable gift an example of heroism, endurance and faith.

In reading the lives of these early and mediæval missionaries we need constantly to remember that the standard by which we should judge the success or failure of missionaries, alike in ancient and modern times, is not supplied by the visible and immediate results that can be registered, but by the opportunities which they afforded to the inhabitants of non-Christian lands to see in them the embodiment of Christian ideals and to behold a real though incomplete reproduction of the life of Jesus Christ.

The story of the conversion of Europe (limited and incomplete as it has been) would form, if it could be adequately told, the most wonderful and inspiring volume which, apart from the Bible, has ever been written. It is in the hope that its glory and inspiration may in some faint measure be discerned that this series of missionary biographies has been planned.

C. H. R.

Preface

The name of Willibrord is far from being a familiar word amongst us. In Belgium, Holland, and the adjoining parts of Germany, on the other hand, the name—sometimes as St. Clement—is kept alive in the popular mind by its association with nearly one hundred churches; and this justly enough, for the region indicated was in part the scene of his missionary labours for almost half a century, and he laid there a secure foundation for the Christian Church among a heathen people. Nevertheless the man himself was English in the strictest sense of the term, having been born of that Anglian race which has its enduring memorial in the very word England. Scotland also, it is true, has a part in him, not only because he may have prattled with Cuthbert and the other Scottish monks who had charge of the Monastery of Ripon when he entered it as a child, but because the North-Humber-Land in which he was born embraced the Scottish Lowlands up to the Forth. Ireland likewise added something to him, for he spent the prime of his early manhood in that country as a student and a recluse. Thus the people of our Islands can all, in some degree, claim Willibrord as flesh of their flesh and spirit of their spirit, and the fact that his work as a missionary was done in other lands should not detract from, but rather enhance, our interest and pride in him. This little volume is published in the hope that those who read it may become better acquainted with one who may—with but slight reservations—be called the first English foreign missionary.

Willibrord's right to a place in a series devoted to the pioneer missionaries on the Continent is past dispute. In his case, however, some departure has been made from the plan laid down by the Editor in his "Anskar," viz., that of giving a version of the earliest extant life of the particular missionary with an introduction and notes designed to illuminate both the biography and its subject. The earliest

extant Life of Willibrord is that written by his fellow-countryman Alcuin, but this, besides being very short, devotes more than half of its thirty-one chapters—paragraphs as we should rather call them—to accounts of miracles, while such concrete details as it does supply are not always reliable. Fortunately we have other sources at our disposal, and from Bede, from contemporary charters, and from Lives of other saints, we can draw a mass of facts about Willibrord many times larger than all that Alcuin tells us. We have therefore thought it best to throw all the data, from whatever source, into the form of an independent sketch, retaining Alcuin's " Life " nevertheless as at once so far keeping to the plan of the series, and presenting to the reader a work which, however defective, is interesting for the sake not only of Willibrord, but also of Alcuin himself, another Englishman who made a great name on the Continent.

The text used for the translation is that of Frobenius, but this has been compared with that of Prof. W. Levison, and with W. Wattenbach's German version—all as noted in the Bibliography.

A synopsis of Bede's matter is given in Appendix A.

As to the form of Willibrord's name, while Bede, his English contemporary, writes Uilbrord or Wilbrord (or Wilbrod), we have adopted the longer form, as that used not only by Alcuin, but by the missionary himself (see Appendix B).

In the preparation of this volume the counsel and guidance of the Editor have been of the utmost service to the writer.

A.G.

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Life of Willibrord.

CHAPTER I

Early Celtic and English Missionaries

By what means and channels the Christian Faith first reached the shores of Britain we cannot say with certainty; but we shall run no great risk in surmising that it came in the train of the legions sent by Imperial Rome to maintain her garrison in the most remote of her western provinces. It is probable that among the dim early centuries of the Christian Church in our islands the historian will always have to move with wary and halting step. Yet, when at length the mists of obscurity begin to lift, we descry clear and decisive evidences of the existence of Christian communities widely spread and showing a marked degree of stability and organisation. Thus, early in the fourth century, as an ancient tradition tells, the British Church added to the roll of martyrs the name of St. Alban; and by another hundred years it had the merit, or demerit, of producing, in Pelagius, a heretic whose name long resounded in the history of doctrine. But from a date scarcely later than the first of these we can trace the rise of something which more than either bespeaks a strong and active Church life; men of apostolic gifts come upon the scene, and the moving torch of missionary enterprise beams forth among the British peoples themselves.

The first of the torch-bearers to loom out of the darkness is Ninian, a native of Southern Strathclyde,

who sets up a modest sanctuary at Whithorn, in Galloway—the *candida casa*, or White Cabin, from which he and his brotherhood of preachers go forth to evangelise their Pictish kinsmen in the north. Next, another British-born youth is taken as a captive from Strathclyde to Ireland, and then, after his release and a sojourn on the continent, returns to the land of his bondage, proclaims the Cross far and wide, and so becomes Ireland's patron saint, the renowned St. Patrick. Again, after a long interval, a child born upon the shores of the River Forth—the grandson of a Pictish king, though from a mother who had been driven from home—becomes the famous Kentigern, or Mungo, who erects a Christian shrine at Glasgow, and subsequently takes occasion of a forced exile to preach the faith in the district of Carlisle and to found a monastery at Llan-Elwy (St. Asaph), in North Wales. About the same time, Ireland makes rich recompense for Britain's gift of Patrick : Columba, a native of Donegal, first wins a great name as a planter of Christian settlements throughout his native land, and then sets out upon the expedition which brings him to Iona, and makes that islet a beacon from which radiate streams of light to the neighbouring islands and to the British mainland—to the Picts of the north, and, later, to the Anglian settlers in North-Humberland.

But the evangelising zeal thus evinced in the more remote and less accessible quarters of our islands called for still wider fields. Bands of strong devoted men—more particularly from Ireland—crossed to the Continent, and dovetailed their monastic settlements into the broad, though discontinuous, front of missionary activity moving—slowly enough—north-

westward from Rome. The most outstanding of these Iro-Scottish monks was Columbanus, who laboured in France, in southern Germany, and then in Italy ; in Lombardy he founded the Abbey of Bobbio, from which came originally the Muratorian Fragment—that mutilated though priceless catalogue of the Scriptures which shows the touch of Iro-Scottish hands writing Latin in their own way.

Prior to the days of Columba and Columbanus, however, the southern part of the greater British island had been invaded and settled on its eastern side by hordes of Teutons from the low-lying coast-lands that stretch from Gaul to Denmark. These new denizens of our country—our own ancestors, in so far as we are of Anglo-Saxon lineage—were entirely heathen, and so fierce and ruthless as to bar for long every avenue by which the influence of Christianity might have reached them. Towards the end of the sixth century, however, a Christian mission from Rome found a footing amongst them in Kent, and thirty years later, as we shall see, came into touch with distant Northumbria ; but the permanent establishment of the Faith in the latter province was due rather to an agent of the Scottish Church. Columba was now gone, but his spirit rested upon Aidan, who, coming from Iona to Lindisfarne, evangelised all the adjacent parts of the mainland. Finan continued his work, while Boisil and Cuthbert helped its expansion beyond the Tweed and the Cheviots, and are still cherished names in the south of Scotland.

Then amongst the people so recently added to the Church, a new and urgent call is heard. What of the lands from which their fathers had come ? What of

their kinsmen there, still sunk in the dark and blood-stained worship of Wodan and Tiw? Thoughts of their dire need stir the devout heart of Ecgberct, an English monk then residing in Ireland for the deeper culture of the inner life, and he plans and prepares to carry the Gospel to his pagan brethren in person; but a disastrous shipwreck brings to nought his splendid hope. Wictberct, his friend and fellow in the spiritual pilgrimage, succeeds in crossing the seas, but achieves little and soon returns. Ecgberct calls others to the task, and among these the one who stands pre-eminent in zeal and endurance, in initiative and high achievement, is *Willibrord*, "the Apostle of the Netherlands," whose career we are to sketch in this little volume.

In this connection we might also speak of Wilfrid of York, and of Winfrid, or Boniface, "the Apostle of Germany," respectively an older and a younger contemporary of Willibrord, and both of them his friends; but we shall have occasion to refer to them more fully later. The point which meanwhile we desire specially to emphasise is that the Iro-Scottish enthusiasm for missionary work came in time also to infect the invading Angle and Saxon. Have we not in this fact an early presage of that strangely fused people who have come to be supreme at once in colonising distant lands and in carrying the Gospel to tribes sitting in darkness? The spirit of adventure to which our colonial empire owes so much, and the evangelising impulse which has dotted continent and island with "Anglo-Saxon" missions, may seem to have little in common with each other. Yet they may often be found side by side, and sometimes they meet and fuse in a single personality, as in Selwyn or

Livingstone, or the early missionary martyr we have just named—Boniface. The latter has placed it on record that his great motives were *timor Christi et amor peregrinationis* " the awe of Christ and love of foreign travel " ; and he thereby provides us with a motto which well suggests the still operative combination of two of the characteristic tendencies of our race.

CHAPTER II

Deira

Of Willibrord's actual birthplace we know nothing further than that it must have lain somewhere in our present Yorkshire, which then formed the larger part of the English, or rather Anglian, kingdom of Deira. The word " Deira " has virtually perished from our common speech, for, while the names of Kent, Essex, and Sussex remain as permanent memorials of our primitive history, and East Anglia and Wessex still survive in the literary world, the name of Deira, like those of the neighbouring kingdoms of Bernicia and Mercia, has little vogue except among students of our remote past.

Yet in many respects Deira might rightfully claim a pre-eminent place in the religious, the intellectual, and even the political development of ancient England. The last to be founded (*c.* 560) of the seven or eight Teutonic settlements in our country, Deira sprang early into a leading position among them ; and, together with the southern portion of Bernicia (with the whole of which it eventually united to form the

kingdom of Northumbria), it has left upon our history a profound and enduring impression. There would indeed seem to be something like an augury in the fact that the fair-haired slave children who in the market-place of Rome attracted the notice of the monk destined to become Pope Gregory the Great, were natives of Deira ; for it was the need of the heathen people there which, envisaged through these children, at length prompted Gregory to equip the memorable Christian mission of Augustine—afterwards Bishop of Canterbury—to Kent, about the beginning of 597 ; so that, though Kent was thus the first of the English kingdoms to receive the gift, the gift itself was prompted by the vision of a Deira which, Christless then, was in time to be delivered *de ira*—" from God's wrath "—and become a far-shining lamp among the heathen English.

It is true that, in a political sense, the pre-eminence of which we have spoken is to be attributed primarily to the larger unit, *i.e.*, Northumbria, the long stretch of country lying between the Humber and the Forth ; still, the main focus even of political power lay in Deira. No fewer than three of the Northumbrian kings were Bretwaldas, or overlords of Britain, viz., Edwin (617-633), Oswald (634-642), and Oswy (642-671) ; and these three, whose names come successively at the end of the list of seven given by Bede, attained a power so extensive as to afford a real, if still incomplete, prefiguration of a united kingdom of all Britain. But from the time when the Christian Faith reached Deira —thirty years after Augustine's landing in Kent,—and after the coming of another Christian mission—from Iona,—it is Deira which for a time moves in the van

of our country's spiritual progress. The Synod of Whitby (664), convened for the purpose of settling the differences between the Anglo-Roman and the Iro-Scottish parties, especially as to the date of Easter, decided for the Roman practice, and thus brought a detached community into organic connection with the ampler and better-disciplined religious forces of the continent; while at the same time it gave what was at once a prophecy and a partial expression of a national Church. The monasteries of Southern Northumbria became celebrated as nurseries of sacred knowledge and literature. That tireless collector of ecclesiastical treasures, Benedict Biscop, belonged to the district, and the rich literary spoils with which he endowed the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow entitle him to be called a pioneer of libraries. The earliest English sacred poetry was composed at Whitby, by Caedmon. The father of English learning, the Venerable Bede, was a monk at Jarrow; while about the time of Bede's death, another great scholar, Alcuin, who was to exercise a vast intellectual influence at the court of Charlemagne, was born at York. And, what concerns us specially here, to Deira likewise, as already indicated, belongs the honour of having produced Willibrord, who may justly be called the first great English foreign missionary.

In the end Northumbria was destined, politically, to fall from the high position it occupied during the seventh century, but, as just shown, in the things of the mind and spirit—and this is true more especially of Deira—it attained to a still nobler eminence, and thus was in no real sense destroyed, but merely suffered

" a sea-change
Into something rich and strange."

CHAPTER III

Willibrord's early years at Ripon

In Deira, then, by far the more influential constituent of the Northumbrian kingdom, Willibrord first saw the light—as nearly as can be computed—towards the end of 657 or in 658. His father was named Wilgils, and Alcuin states that he was by descent a Saxon ; as Deira, however, was in Angle-land, and lay somewhat remote from the Saxon settlements in the stricter sense, we may perhaps infer that Willibrord's parents belonged to the race in whose midst they lived. The home from which our missionary sprang was one in which religion ranked as a great and vital reality, for, as will be seen, both father and mother were of notably devout spirit, and loyal adherents of the Church.

The active career of Willibrord, as Alcuin recounts it, is so replete with signs and wonders that we shall not be surprised to find the miraculous breaking in even before his birth. On a certain night the wife of Wilgils had a strange dream. In a vision she saw the new moon fill out rapidly from crescent to the perfect round, and, as she gazed, something fell from it, entered her mouth, and filled her body with light. Next day she related this experience to a priest, and was assured by him that it presaged the birth of a son who by his pure life and resplendent gifts would illuminate the darkness of many. In due time the child of promise came, was baptized with the name Willibrord, and, after scarcely more than the needful years of a mother's care—" immediately after being weaned," says Alcuin—was handed over to the monks

of the monastery at Ripon, where in an environment of holy living and sacred instruction, he was to be trained for the high task foreshadowed in his mother's dream.

The religious spirit of his father shows itself, to begin with, in his entrusting the child to the brethren of Ripon, but comes out still more distinctly in his subsequent doings. Instigated by the desire of fostering his own spiritual life, and stimulating others to embrace the faith, Wilgils, having already assumed the monk's habit, resolved to live as a hermit, and found a retreat on the promontory that ends in Spurn Head, at the mouth of the Humber. Here he fitted out a cell, or oratory, dedicated to St. Andrew, and gave himself to prayer, fasting, and vigil, yet not neglecting to speak the word to such as might visit him. His zeal, moreover, came under the notice of the king and his chief men, who assigned to him various properties in the vicinity, so that he was able at length to build a church, and make it the centre of a group of monks.

These details we owe to Alcuin, who further informs us that at a later time he himself became heir to the property of Wilgils, as also to the headship of the monastic brotherhood associated with it: "by legal succession," as he puts it, though not necessarily implying—what is sometimes said—that he was kin to the family to which Willibrord belonged. The narrative at this stage suggests questions at every turn. Where exactly was the church that Wilgils erected, and in what work did its monks engage? Had the anchorite his wife with him? Did Willibrord ever have dealings with his parents again? But to all inquiries of the kind Alcuin's pen has left us no answer.

The monastery of Ripon, to which Wilgils and his wife committed the nurture of their child, was itself at that time hardly out of its swaddling-clothes. It owed its origin to a pious aspiration of Alchfrid, son of King Oswy and under-king of Deira, and at his request was organised by Eata, abbot of Melrose, who brought with him the venerated Cuthbert as his chief co-adjutor. It is pleasant to think that Willibrord during his earliest years was in personal touch with these notable men. But almost before he had reached the kindergarten stage, the recently founded monastery was shaken by a minor revolution. King Alchfrid had come into cordial relations with Wilfrid, afterwards Bishop of York, but then (*c.*661) just back from a somewhat prolonged sojourn on the continent. Wilfrid was a strenuous and even dictatorial upholder of the Roman practice in the matter of the tonsure and the reckoning of Easter, and under his influence, the views of Alchfrid, which had already a decided Roman trend, became sharply crystallized on that side. The king, however, was not content to rest here, but determined to introduce the new mode into the monastery which he regarded as peculiarly his own. To Eata and Cuthbert, with their associates, he accordingly offered the choice of either relinquishing their British practices or leaving his monastery. They took the latter course, and the charge thus vacated was given to Wilfrid.

Willibrord was, of course, too young to understand the point at issue ; nor can the decision of the Synod of Whitby, three years later, have been of any real concern to one who was as yet barely seven years old. The change must nevertheless have been of signal

importance to the boy, who in his most plastic years could not but be powerfully influenced by the teaching and spirit of the learned, far-travelled, masterful Wilfrid. Some time in the next decade (671-678) Ripon was enriched by the erection of a stately church, and this event must have been a matter of uncommon interest to Willibrord, now in his teens—young enough to note the rising of the walls with intent and curious eye, yet sufficiently mature in spirit to rejoice in the prospect of the completed minster, from which the Word of Life would sound forth to all the region round about.

As regards Willibrord's education we are told nothing except that he was studious far beyond the common and showed remarkable precocity. But we may be sure that his masters would take him through the seven "liberal arts," namely, the "trivial"—grammar, rhetoric, and dialectic—and the "quadrivial"—geometry, astronomy, arithmetic, and music,—supplemented by a continuous course in the knowledge of Holy Scripture. It was, without doubt, in respect of these studies that Alcuin so highly extols the young scholar's eagerness in learning and quickness of apprehension, allied always with modesty and rare fineness of disposition, so that he stood second to none among his comrades, and in the immature physical frame of youth already manifested the gravity and ripeness of age.

Nevertheless, it was not as a man of learning that Willibrord was to stamp his name indelibly upon the page of Church History. From his hand was to come no volume that would keep his memory alive for more than a millennium, as the *Ecclesiastical History* has

proved to be for the Venerable Bede a monument more enduring than brass. In the meagre book-room of Ripon, Willibrord may have been as assiduous a student as Bede was in the ampler library of Jarrow, but he evidently had not, as Bede pre-eminently had, the pen of a ready writer and the inward craving for literary utterance. In truth, his supreme gift was at first that of the saint, the absorbed votary, the willing and joyful observer of those daily offices of the Church for which Bede interrupted his studies from a sense of duty—lest, as he himself says, the visiting angels should have to ask "Where is Bede?" Willibrord's earnestness in all the duties set before him was so marked that while still young he received the tonsure (in the Roman or circular form, no doubt) as an earnest of the clerical office, and thereafter took the vow that made him a monk, pledged to the rule of St. Benedict.

About the time when Willibrord attained the age of twenty, the monastery which had been his home from childhood passed through a second crisis, less drastic indeed than the first, but, as it would appear, of greater consequence to the young monk. In 678 Wilfrid, now Bishop of Northumbria, found his prerogative challenged by King Egfrid, who took the extreme step of expelling him from his see. Wilfrid carried his case in person to Rome. It is but natural to suppose that this incident created an untoward situation in his monastery at Ripon; at any rate, it was at this juncture that Willibrord left the place, never to return. He was now to enter upon another long period of self-discipline—in a scene altogether new, in very different circumstances, and with a consummation infinitely more momentous for himself as for many others.

CHAPTER IV

Willibrord in Ireland

In thus connecting the first great break in Willibrord's career with an event of external history, namely, Wilfrid's expulsion from Ripon, we cannot claim to have the direct authority of our sources. Alcuin, in characteristic fashion, represents the change as due to a rising unrest in the heart of the youth himself. The monastic ideal hovered before his vision as something still not fully realised, and he aspired after a more complete dedication of himself to its demands. No doubt he desired a fuller knowledge of sacred things, but such knowledge he regarded chiefly as a means to a deeper sanctity of life and a closer union with Christ. Nor would it appear that any strivings of missionary zeal had as yet arisen in that eager soul; no,—his overmastering passion meanwhile was to clarify and intensify the flame within rather than to shed the light upon those who still sat in darkness. It is probable that the expulsion of his abbot and master from the monastery served to bring these yearnings to a point, and prompted him to look for a fresh sphere in which hope and desire should come closer to fruition.

Now, in that period it was a common practice amongst those in Britain who aspired after a deeper religious experience to sojourn for a time in Ireland. Ireland was the "Isle of Saints"; it was also a fertile nursery of sacred scholarship, and was far-famed for its missionary zeal; and Willibrord, believing that he would find there the conditions congenial to the ideal life, resolved to proceed to that country. Two saintly

names had reached his ears, and become as the twin loadstars of his heart: Ecgberct and Wictberct. These men had left home and kindred in Angle-land, and, "out of love for the heavenly country," had gone as willing exiles to Ireland. Willibrord now followed their example, and actually associated himself with them. Moreover, in his intercourse with them he experienced such spiritual and mental enlargement that he was content to continue with them for a full dozen years. After ten of these he was ordained priest.

One solitary incident comes down from the period of his residence in Ireland. It is Bede who narrates it, though in Willibrord's own words,—as heard by Acca, Bede's intimate friend, and Bishop Wilfrid, when these two with others were on a visit to Frisia many years after; and the story is related rather in evidence of the posthumous fame of the pious King Oswald than in honour of Willibrord. An Irish scholar, studious but ill-behaved, is struck down by the plague, and, in apprehension of speedy death, asks Willibrord to make such use of any relics of King Oswald in his keeping as might, under God's blessing, cure the disorder. It so happened that Willibrord had at that time a splinter from the stake upon which the king's head had been exposed, and, putting this into a little water which he had blessed, he gave the invalid to drink thereof. Thereupon the malady relaxed its hold, and the sufferer was soon completely restored, thenceforward to live a changed life. The narrative as given by Bede may be true to the last detail, and one almost regrets that it adds nothing to our conviction of King Oswald's sanctity, and rather inclines us to demur to the logic of the several narrators.

We cannot be sure even of the locality of Willibrord's stay in Ireland. We know, indeed, that in 664, Ecgberct resided in a monastery at Rathmelsigi, but whether he was still there when Willibrord joined him fourteen years later cannot be determined. Besides, Rathmelsigi itself is variously placed, some writers supposing it to be in Connaught, while others identify it with Melfont in County Louth.

Willibrord's object in going to Ireland was, as we have seen, to gain a richer nurture of the spirit and an increase in sacred learning; and, doubtless, in fellowship with Ecgberct and his world-renouncing associates, he largely found what heart and mind had longed for. Yet in the " convent's narrow room " and the student's " pensive citadel " there came to him a wistful dreaming of a new kind. Was it not too limited a life-task to be thus for ever engaged in mere self-culture and in his own development in spiritual things? Or, rather, would not a still fuller satisfaction of soul be secured by devoting what he had already acquired to the service of others? His thoughts ran out to wider horizons, to more spacious lands and still Christless peoples; the *amor peregrinationis* had smitten him. He would therefore go forth as a missionary to some land whose inhabitants were still aliens to the Kingdom of Christ.

In all this, moreover, he had the countenance and support of his revered master—Ecgberct. Ecgberct, as has been already noted, was no stranger to the same lofty ambition; he too had cherished plans for preaching the Word in remote and as yet unillumined regions. Frisia in particular, had been the magnet of his desires; by a divine leading, however, he had been

directed to another sphere. All the more ready was he, accordingly, to commend to Willibrord the work from which he himself had been debarred. Thus at length, with Ecgberct's sanction and warm support, Willibrord prepared to set forth upon a Christian mission to Friesland, where in the providence of God he was to labour for nearly fifty years.

Perhaps at this point we may deal most conveniently with Willibrord's attitude to the matters in debate between the Iro-Scottish communion and the Roman—a question sometimes discussed with no little acrimony in modern biographies or accounts of our missionary. It is asserted by certain writers that he was an adherent of the Church which still had its centre at Iona. Such a view, however, can hold its ground only upon the basis of a thorough-going recast of our sources. To begin with, Willibrord's most formative years in Ripon were those during which Wilfrid was head of the monastery, and we have seen that Wilfrid was a strong partisan upon the Roman side. We know also that Ecgberct, at whose feet Willibrord sat for more than a decade in Ireland, was the man who at a slightly later date went to Iona for the express purpose of converting that community to the Roman rule. Then, as we shall see shortly, one of the first steps taken by Willibrord, after reaching the Continent, was to go to Rome in order to obtain the Roman bishop's sanction and support for the work before him. And, above all, Bede, who does not fail to speak critically, and even severely, of those followers of the "Scottish error" whom in other respects he warmly admires, always

refers to Willibrord in terms of unqualified praise. From these data we can draw no other inference than that Willibrord belonged alike by training and by personal choice to the side which had won the day at the Synod of Whitby.

CHAPTER V

Friesland and its needs

The Frisia, or Friesland, which Willibrord had chosen as his field of service was a territory ill-defined and unstable. In the late seventh century it stretched from the mouth of the Ems to that of the Scheldt, with a hinterland of varying depth. It thus included the ancient Batavia ; and the islands that skirt the coast, as well as the more distant Heligoland, also belonged to it. Here land and water waged constant war with each other, and man's alliance with the former still left their mutual boundary to come and go ; thus, at a much later date, the inland lake of Flevo was claimed by an inrush of the sea and merged in the Zuider Zee, while another mighty thrust of the ocean produced the Dollart. Moreover, Frisia was in a region of migrating peoples and shifting chiefdoms. From the district to the north-east, Saxons and Angles had emigrated to Britain, and Frisians too had a share in these expeditions ; on the south, the Frankish kingdom was quick to encroach wherever it detected a lax frontier. Amid circumstances so adverse the integrity and independence of the country could not have been long maintained except by a people of uncommon vigour and the most tenacious spirit.

The Frisians were a tall, well set-up race ; fair-haired and blue-eyed. They were great lovers of freedom—the "free Frisians," as they came to be called ; democrats, having kings, it is true, yet having also gemots, or assemblies, to control them. Marriage was held in honour amongst them, so that they did not in this respect conform to the substantival part of Nietzsche's notorious epithet, "blonde beast." They were certainly heathens, worshipping the three or four deities common to all the Germanic tribes, and having also special gods of their own. And, though never flinching from war when their independence was menaced, they were not at this period bellicose ; in fact they were now pushing forward in the peaceful arts of fishing, cattle-rearing, and woollen manufacture, while the well-sheltered estuaries of several great rivers provided excellent harbourage for their relatively extensive commerce. As regards the racial features mentioned, they were closely akin to most of the nations round about them ; their language likewise was very similar to that of both Franks and Saxons, and its difference from the idiom of the Germanic peoples recently settled in Britain was merely dialectal. Hence the well-known couplet :—

Good butter and good cheese
Is good English and good Fries.

If it was the racial link that helped to draw Willibrord to Frisia in particular, doubtless the resemblance of the Frisian tongue to his own served in a great degree to smooth the ground for his work.

To the south and south-east of the Frisian country lay Francia, the kingdom of the Franks, now—after the battle of Testry in 687—welded into a powerful and

consolidated nation, and ready to widen its boundaries on all sides. The Franks had been Christians by profession for nearly 200 years, but their Christianity only furnished them with a fresh motive for conquest ; for this was an epoch in which Christians often scrupled as little as Mohammed to use the sword in the work of conversion. Early in the seventh century the Franks had subjugated the southern zone of Frisia, and had planted a church as far north as Utrecht, and though a revolt had thrown the frontier back again, and restored heathenism in the contested area, yet the state-craft of Francia was now (say 690) directed by a more efficient and more ruthless hand than ever before. After Dagobert I. the Frankish kings, the Merwings or Merovingians, were all more or less decadents, physical and mental nullities, and the confederation might have fallen to pieces but for the rise of that able lineage of viceroys, or mayors of the palace, that reached its culmination in Charlemagne —the Pippins. The *rois fainéants* Theoderics and Childeberts sat on the throne, while the *major domus* Pippin wielded sceptre and sword, and wielded them well both for his country and for his own house. Hence the Frisians, with but a precarious hold upon their southern border, and with neighbours there whom they regarded as literal land-sharks, watched every move in that quarter with distrustful and apprehensive eyes.

Now, of course, the Frisians, merely as heathens, had a natural aversion to Christianity, but the fact that their chief enemy was a Christian nation gave a sharper edge to their antagonism. In particular, they viewed with suspicion and alarm every attempt on the part of

their neighbours to introduce the alien faith amongst them. They feared the Franks proffering this gift—a gift tainted from the outset, and savouring of Frankish ambition. In the earlier part of the seventh century not a few missionaries from the south had pushed their way among the border Frisians; notably Amandus and Eligius, men of outstanding ability, had made strenuous efforts in that district, but their success was not great, and permanent results seem to have been confined to the debatable land where the Frankish power could on occasion make itself felt. In any case, these endeavours can hardly have extended further than the southern limits of the present Holland, while Frisia stretched thence north-eastward for about two hundred miles—a tract denizened by a people not desiring the Gospel, but all the more in need of it. Word of their need was somehow carried across the sea to the British Islands, and awoke a sympathetic response in devoted hearts there. From that direction, accordingly, the next efforts to evangelize Frisia were to be made—efforts that had the merit of being free from any suspicion of political or other ulterior motive, evoked as they were purely by the desire to let a people who lived in darkness see the Great Light.

The first of these efforts was something of an episode. When, in 678, Wilfrid of Northumbria, was—as we have seen—ejected from his bishopric, and had determined to seek redress in Rome, he, from a well-grounded fear of assassination in Neustria, took the less direct route through Frisia. Here he was received by King Aldgils I., not merely in peace, but with much honour. Indeed, the pagan king exposed and foiled a base Christian plot against the wayfaring

bishop, and gave him every opportunity to proclaim his faith. Wilfrid seized the occasion, and spent a whole winter in the country, preaching to multitudes of people, as we are told, and baptizing them in thousands. Nevertheless, as he could not, or at least did not, stay long enough to consolidate and organize his converts, it would seem that they largely fell back to their heathen faith and practice.

As regards the subsequent endeavours from the west to convert the Frisians to Christianity, viz., those of Ecgberct, Wictberct, and Willibrord, we need not add much to what has already been said in reference to the first two. The chief inspirer of these efforts, we may be certain, was Ecgberct, who desired fervently to undertake the task in person, but who, warned by the dreams of a friend that he was to go rather to the monasteries of Columba, and bring them into the true way, namely, the Roman usage regarding the tonsure, the date of Easter, monastic life, etc., was finally dissuaded by the destruction of the ship he had equipped for a mission to Frisia, and so never set foot in that field. His like-minded fellow-monk Wictberct, on the other hand, not only succeeded in reaching Frisia, but actually proclaimed the Christian message there for two whole years. By this time Aldgils was dead, and had given place to his son Radbod, who seems to have been a heathen by conviction, and who, while he may have tolerated Wictberct's preaching, certainly gave it no countenance; so that the missionary, discouraged by his want of success, at length left the intractable field, and went back to his silent hermitage in Ireland.

Ecgberct, however, though twice rebuffed, was not

the man to relinquish his project in despair. He began to look about for other agents. Willibrord, having already heard the inward call, needed no persuasion, and Ecgberct's zeal evoked a quick response from eleven other eager spirits. The requisite number of twelve having thus been mustered, the devoted band went forth to the work—ready, for that work's sake, to encounter perils of waters and the no less grave perils that would attend them when they were strangers in a strange land.

CHAPTER VI

Preparations and beginnings

Thus at length Willibrord stands face to face with the task that was to occupy the half-century of life that still lay before him. His twenty years of preparation in Ripon, followed by twelve of maturing in Ireland, had brought him, as Alcuin puts it, to the "full age of Christ," *i.e.*, his thirty-third year; the date is 690 A.D. His position as head of the little missionary band was due to his recognised personal qualities, and possibly also to the fact that he seems to have been the only member of it who was of priestly rank. What material resources the twelve had at their disposal we cannot tell; but they had high courage and great faith; they were sure of the blessing and prayers of the saintly Ecgberct, and convinced that God was with them. Availing themselves of some trading vessel sailing from an Irish port, they came at length by a semi-circular route to the Frisian coast. Their landing-place was the mouth of the Rhine—*i.e.*, what is now called the

Old Rhine—in the neighbourhood of Katwyk. Their voyage safely over, they rested a while by the shore, and then moved up-stream towards the fortified town of Wiltaburg, the Roman Trajectum (" crossing," " ford "), the modern Utrecht (Dutch : *oud*, old, prefixed to a corruption of the Latin name)—the first town of any size visited by Willibrord on the Continent, and one that was to become indissolubly linked with his name and his work.

Here our missionary found himself among the people whom he had come to enlighten ; here too he was probably brought face to face with Radbod, who was to prove for long a sinister factor in his experience. Meanwhile, however, he was received without active antagonism. But the king's face was adverse, and no encouraging or inviting look came from the people. Thus Willibrord, finding it impossible to make even the slightest breach in this stolid resistance, resolved to turn southwards with a view to finding Pippin, the ruler of the Franks. This Pippin, or Pepin, of Héristal (Herstal, near Liège, Belgium) was the major-domus of the Frankish king, and now bore also the title " Duke of the Franks." At that time (if Willibrord's visit to Frankland took place after mid-May 690) the king was Hludowic (Clovis, Ludwig, Louis) III., who might sign edicts and ride in processions, but it was Pippin who led the country in peace and war, and knew well how to enforce his supremacy in the Church. What Willibrord sought from Pippin was in reality a base of operations from which he would be able to penetrate at least a portion of the great Frisian field. Now, the Duke had recently subjugated a part of southern Frisia, and being more than willing that a Christian mission

should be prosecuted there, he readily granted Willibrord's request, and gave him full authority to proceed.

But our missionary, while thus assured of a promising sphere of work, thought it right not to embark upon the task until he should have the sanction and blessing of the chief apostolic see at Rome, the occupant of which at that time was Sergius I. He was humble enough, moreover, to think that he should require instruction as to the nature and methods of Christian evangelisation, and devout enough—as devoutness counted in his day—to feel the need of relics of the saints as a means of consecrating the churches he hoped to found. In the expectation of receiving these things from the hands of the chief Bishop, he presently set out upon the long and arduous journey to Rome. Sergius welcomed him heartily, responded to all his requests in the most generous way, and sent him back rejoicing to his appointed sphere. Without delay the work began, and Willibrord and his colleagues soon found it growing mightily in their hands, and yielding results that filled them with joy, and with the hope of still better things to come.

At some time not long after the promising beginning of the Frisian mission an incident emerges which has given rise to no little debate. Our sole informant here is Bede ; Alcuin does not make the slightest reference to it. Bede tells us that the missionary brethren in Frisia took occasion at this time to choose from amongst themselves one who should act as bishop among them, and that their choice fell upon one named Suidbert, a man noted for sobriety of life and meekness of spirit. They then sent him to England in order to

his being consecrated. In the ordinary course he would have sought the required episcopal orders in Canterbury, but for the moment there was no bishop in residence there; for Berchtwald, though duly appointed to the see in succession to the deceased Theodore, had crossed to Gaul (between the 1st of July, 692, and the 31st of August, 693) with a view to his own consecration in that country. Suidbert accordingly made his way to Mercia, where Wilfrid of Northumbria—once more an exile from his province—happened then to be resident, and it was from the hands of the dispossessed Wilfrid that the candidate received his Orders. When Bishop Suidbert returned to Frisia, however, he does not seem to have stayed long with the brethren, for in a little while he set out towards a new field, viz., the country of the Boructuari, a region lying considerably to the east of Frisia. Here he laboured for a time with no little success, but at length, the country and its people having been overwhelmed by an irruption of the Old Saxons, his converts were dispersed, and he himself, finding his promising work thus erased at a stroke, was glad to seek shelter at the Frankish court. Thereupon Pippin, at the request of Blithryda (Plectrude), his wife, gave Suidbert a residence in an island of the Rhine called In Litore (now Kaiserswerth). This place is situated about seven miles north of Düsseldorf, but is no longer an island. Its parish church still possesses a shrine which is believed to contain the bones of Suidbert; the monastery which he founded has long ago disappeared.

Here Bede's narrative simply bristles with difficulties. If the brethren in Frisia saw need for a bishop, why did they not select Willibrord, their

leader? And why was it necessary for Suidbert to seek consecration in Britain, when even the Archbishop-elect of Canterbury could find the required charism on the Continent? Again, on Suidbert's return, why does he—apparently—leave his diocese and go to the Boructuari? And when his work had been trampled under foot, why does he go to Pippin rather than to Willibrord and his brethren? Finally, why does he abandon the work of an evangelist, and resume that of the recluse?

While these questions have to do mainly with Suidbert, we shall find that in seeking feasible answers to them we come into touch with almost all that is definitely known of Willibrord during the four years or so between his return from Rome and another great turning-point of his life. Before dealing with the events of that interval, however, we would note that certain modern writers introduce fresh perplexities by treating of Suidbert's election to office as having taken place during Willibrord's absence in Rome, and without his consent or knowledge. Some (*e.g.*, A. Thijm) see in the whole proceeding a manœuvre on Pippin's part, others (*e.g.*, J. H. A. Ebrard) a revolt of the Culdee spirit among the brethren; in either case a protest against Willibrord's homage or subserviency to Rome. But although Bede often tangles his materials in puzzling fashion, it happens that at this particular point his language is quite clear, for he brings Willibrord back to Frisia before he says a word about Suidbert, thus implying that the former was a party to the whole transaction. No doubt, were it the case that the elevation of Suidbert to the episcopate took place during Willibrord's absence in Rome, the

whole proceeding might seem to be a revolt of the eleven brethren left in Frisia against the Romanizing proclivities of their leader ; and the sudden departure of Suidbert to the Boructuari would then be explained as due to the return of Willibrord, now doubly invested with authority to lead the mission among the Frisians. The theory, however, runs counter to another plain statement of Bede, viz., Suidbert's consecration by Wilfrid, for how should an anti-Roman candidate for the episcopal dignity accept consecration at the hands of the strongly pro-Roman Wilfrid ? On this point Bede can hardly have been in error ; the incident occurred in his own life-time, and he may well have got the facts from Wilfrid himself.

For a time it seemed as if the perplexities of Bede's narrative had been largely solved by the supposed discovery of Suidbert's name and title in an ancient manuscript. An entry at the end of the celebrated Vienna Livy, belonging to the fifth century, had been read thus : " This codex belongs to Suidbert, Bishop of Dorostat," seeming to shew that Suidbert actually did serve for a time as bishop in Frisia, and had his seat at Dorostat, *i.e.*, Wijk bij Duurstede (as accepted by Plummer, *Baedae opera historica*, II. p. 291) ; whence it might be argued that he acted in that capacity until Willibrord himself became archbishop, when he might fitly have thought of breaking new ground among the Boructuari, for that people too had a place in the list of nations to which Ecgberct proposed to send the Gospel. Unfortunately for this presumptive clearance of the difficulties, however, a more accurate reading of the entry gives not *Suidbert*, but *Theutbert*, and we are left in darkness as great as ever.

Perhaps the most promising suggestion as to the real solution of the difficulty is to be found in an apparently unimportant phrase used by Bede near the end of what he says about Suidbert: it was "at the solicitation of Blithryda," he tells us, that Pippin gave Suidbert a place of refuge. Does not this seem to imply that Pippin himself was not well-disposed towards Suidbert, and is not the most likely explanation of that to be found in his having been entirely averse to Suidbert's election and promotion to the position of bishop? If, then, with this guiding thread in our mind, we follow Bede's narrative, we are able to frame the course of events in a manner that leaves little to embarrass us. Thus when Willibrord returned from Rome in 691, he and his companions set to work at once, and achieved such substantial results that in little over a year they could think of forming a new diocese of the Church. When the question arose who should fill the projected see, doubtless Willibrord had the suffrages of all his colleagues, but his well-attested humility stood in the way of his acceptance, and the choice then fell upon Suidbert, mainly by reason of his staid, simple, and devout character. But the action did not please the major domus, who was already revolving in his mind a greater and bolder plan. This will explain why Suidbert sought consecration in Britain, for it might have proved inexpedient to seek such at the hands of the Frankish bishops—all more or less, no doubt, under the influence of Pippin. Then, while Bede certainly chronicles the return of the consecrated Suidbert from Britain and his departure to the Boructuari in two adjacent clauses, yet he quite distinctly separates the two events by using the

phrase "not long afterwards"—words that might cover any interval from days to years. Thus Suidbert may quite well have exercised his episcopal function for two years in Frisia, though without a definite seat; the favour of Pippin would have been required for that. Then at length the Duke of the Franks propounded his own plan: Frisia to become a province of the Church, and its archbishop to be Willibrord! When this was at last accomplished (695)—we shall see later how—Suidbert might quite fitly think of seeking a fresh field among the Boructuari. Finally, the fact that he fled to Pippin after the melancholy collapse of his two years' work may mean no more than that he made for the nearest port in the storm—Cologne, where Pippin was quite likely to be; while his ready acceptance of an asylum upon In Litore may indicate that the sorely-tried evangelist—never perhaps a very virile personality—was glad to exchange the burden of active service for the calm pursuits of the cloister.

CHAPTER VII

Expansion of the field

The interval between Willibrord's first visit to Rome, undertaken with a view to his obtaining the sanction of Pope Sergius for the projected work in Frisia, and the next important step in his career, viz., his second visit to the Holy See, in the course of which he was consecrated archbishop of the Frisians, lasted about four years (691-695), but, with the exception of the Suidbert episode, is almost a complete blank as regards concrete details. No doubt the fact that the

brothers in Frisia required a bishop at all shows that their work was progressing favourably, and assuming proportions that called for the organization of what they had already gained, and some unification of their plans for further effort ; but if we ask for particulars as to place and time, we get but a halting answer. What precisely was the locality that formed the theatre of these successful and promising labours, and how did they proceed from year to year ? It is far from easy to say, for, although evidence is not entirely lacking, it comes to us in loose and dangling threads, and is not easily combined into a single and reliable strand.

One of the main difficulties as to the locality of Willibrord's work during this period arises from the shifting nature of the frontier between the Franks and the Frisians. Thus, some time prior to Willibrord's arrival on the Continent, Pippin had subjugated the southern part of Frisia ; but, besides the fact that we do not know the boundaries of this conquered zone, we are perplexed as to whether our sources will speak of it as Frankish or as Frisian. Then again, in the period under consideration there was a further change. When Willibrord landed in 690 Utrecht was in Radbod's hands, and was the centre of a pagan country ; while five years later that citadel has come into Pippin's possession—as a result, it is believed, of a campaign against the Frisians about the year 693. Here, accordingly, we have two belts of Frisian territory brought within the boundaries of the Frankish kingdom, while doubtless still largely populated by Frisian people ; so that when our authorities speak, as they do, of Willibrord's work as having been carried on " within the bounds of Pippin's kingdom," " in the

northern parts of the kingdom," " in nearer Frisia," or simply " in Frisia," it is far from easy to determine the exact localities they had in view. The most natural hypothesis would be that he began with the Frisian districts which had been longest subject to Frankish dominion, and that he gradually carried his operations further and further northwards till he reached or even passed Utrecht.

It is worth noticing, in this connection, that, after the victory that pushed the Frankish-Frisian boundary as far as Utrecht, the two peoples came for a time to live on more amicable terms with each other, as a token and pledge of which we have the fact that Pippin's son Grimoald, who became major domus of Neustria, married the daughter of Radbod. This seems to have meant also that Radbod, though still clinging to his heathenism, did not thereafter—for many years at least—place any obstacles in the way of the missionaries.

Let us now come to our sources. Alcuin tells us that when Willibrord first came to Pippin the latter was strongly averse to denying himself and his people of the services of so great a teacher, and that he assigned to the missionary certain localities within the bounds of his kingdom. Alcuin's geography is not clear to us—it does not seem indeed to have been clear to himself; but he probably means that Willibrord's first sphere of labour lay in a district that had been Frankish for a considerable time. To this we may add the witness of a very ancient tradition to the effect that Willibrord was associated for a while with Lambert, Bishop of Maastricht. Lambert, it is said, gave Willibrord a hearty welcome, and took him as a companion on various missionary journeys; and the

tradition finds some support in the fact that in the present diocese of Roermond (28 miles north of Maastricht) there are found three churches dedicated to St. Willibrord.

There is, moreover, some documentary evidence that during the four or five years in question, Willibrord had a connection with Antwerp. A charter, not now extant, but referred to by the Theoderic who at the close of the 12th century copied Thiofrid's "Life of Willibrord" into the Echternach Chronicle (see Bibliography), is said to have set forth that a distinguished man named Rauchingus, in the third year of Clovis III. (*i.e.*, about 693), gave Willibrord a church—originally built by Bishop Amandus, and dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul—in the fortress of Antwerp, together with one-third share of the custom-house there in support of it. Now a line drawn between Roermond and Antwerp passes in the main just to the south of the present border between Belgium and Holland, but at the beginning of the period of which we speak would have lain well within the recently conquered part of Frisia, and this district, while politically Frankish,was certainly mainly Frisian in population. The belt of country thus indicated would accordingly be Willibrord's earliest field.

We turn next to the witness of Bede. In his Ecclesiastical History, Book V., chapter 10, Bede informs us that as a result of Willibrord's labours "many were converted in Nearer Frisia," and, in chapter 11, that Willibrord was sent by Pippin to Rome for consecration as archbishop after he and his colleagues "had spent some years teaching in Frisia." The "Nearer Frisia" of the first reference may well

coincide with the district that Alcuin speaks of; but it is likely (especially when it is borne in mind that the political frontier had been pushed much further north about the year 693) that the unqualified "Frisia" of the second quotation denotes a much more extended area, stretching even beyond the great waterways of the lower Maas and Rhine. As we saw above, Pippin's power latterly extended to Utrecht; what was more likely than that Willibrord should advance his northern outpost to that city? Here too, moreover, we have the support of tradition. It is stated by John of Beka (14th century) that Willibrord not only reached Utrecht, but actually erected an oratory and baptistery near the ruins of the Church of St. Thomas—a church which had been built there by Frankish missionaries about a hundred years before, but in consequence of a southward thrust of Frisian heathenism, had long lain a mere wreck.

In short, the tokens are all in favour of the view that Willibrord, beginning work on a restricted scale, closed the four successful and promising years of his journeymanship in a greatly expanded sphere, and there is nothing inherently improbable in the tradition that he had reached Utrecht some time before that town was assigned to him as the seat of his archbishopric.

Before leaving this section of Willibrord's career we may refer to two or three personalities who, if they did not come into contact with Willibrord himself, had more or less close relations with his sphere of labour. We begin with the two Hewalds. Bede in the heading of v. 10 speaks of them as companions of Willibrord, and in his Martyrology says distinctly that they went to Germany with him; but in the text of

the chapter cited they are said to have followed the example of Willibrord's group, and thus, while possibly they may have crossed to the Continent with that company, it is implied that they had gone independently on their brief and tragic enterprise. Like Willibrord, they were of English blood, and had resided for spiritual ends in Ireland ; but their chosen field was the country of the Old Saxons. In zeal and devotion, as in name, the two were alike ; the diverse colour of their hair provided a means of explicitly distinguishing them as the Black Hewald and the White Hewald. Their mission came to a swift and sudden end. Hardly had they crossed the frontier of the Old Saxons when they were barbarously set upon and murdered by a village mob. Their bodies, which were thrown with contumely into the Rhine, were, Bede tells us, miraculously carried upstream, and were found and identified as a result of miraculous visions. The grave to which they were then committed was only a temporary resting-place, for by order of Pippin the remains were subsequently transferred to Cologne, and reinterred with due solemnities in the church there.

It must have been during this period also that Willibrord's immediate field was entered by a certain Wulfram, whose name is linked with one of the most curious narratives in the annals of these early missions. This Wulfram was bishop of Sens (a town situated to the south-east of Paris, on the River Yonne) in 690, and careful computation seems to point to 696 as the date of his death. At some intermediate time, it is recorded, a divine monition enjoined him to go to Frisia as a missionary. He went, and preached with

no little success ; he baptised a son of Radbod, and all but succeeded in inducing Radbod himself to submit to the rite. The king—so the tradition runs—duly presented himself at the font, and had actually set one foot in the water, when he paused to ask where all the departed kings, princes, and nobles of the land were now—in heaven or in hell. Wulfram replied that all of them, dying unbaptised, had without the slightest doubt received the sentence of condemnation. Thereupon Radbod withdrew his foot, saying in high disdain that he would not renounce the society of his great forerunners for that of a few poor folk in heaven.

The two lives of Wulfram that furnish these data are regarded by most scholars as untrustworthy, and it is doubted and even denied that Wulfram was ever in Frisia at all—a view that expunges the arrested baptism from the page of history. Still, the story is not incompatible with anything that we positively know, nor is it in any way uncharacteristic of Radbod, who hovered about the door of the Church for years ; it has, moreover, an air of verisimilitude, and on the whole the present writer inclines to accept it as authentic. We may regret that the peremptory judgment of Wulfram upon the departed princes of Frisia turned, not upon any test of faith or morals, but solely upon the question as to their having, or not having, been baptised ; it was, however, the Church rather than merely the prelate that so spoke. And it is possible to regret also that Radbod's parting rejoinder is too full of patrician scorn to justify us in setting him beside the viking of Stevenson's fable—the " old rover " who, when the heavenly mansions were overwhelmed by the powers of darkness, resolved " to die with Odin."

After all, however, it is difficult to understand on what footing Wulfram, a Frankish bishop, could work in a sphere specially allotted to Willibrord both by the Roman pontiff and by Duke Pippin. A late attempt to explain the matter is found in a group of 13th century MSS. of Alcuin's life, which contain a passage stating that Wulfram was for the time a member of Willibrord's company, but the passage is obviously an interpolation. Wulfram's presence in Frisia, again, has been traced by some writers to the machinations of Pippin, who is supposed to have been playing a double game—overtly supporting Willibrord, while secretly trying to cut the ground from under him, with Wulfram as his tool. It has to be confessed that our knowledge of the time is too meagre to enable us to place the Frisian mission of the Bishop of Sens in its true light, but, as was said before, nothing that we positively know conflicts with its being historical.

CHAPTER VIII

Willibrord consecrated archbishop

As we have seen, Willibrord and his companions had within a few years succeeded in evangelising a large tract of country which was mainly Frisian as regards population, but Frankish in a political sense. Pippin, eager to have this newly-won territory organised as a province of the Church, naturally looked to Willibrord as the most likely man for the task, and resolved to have him invested with full ecclesiastical authority. He thereupon proposed that the missionary should go to Rome with a view to his being consecrated bishop

of the Frisians. Willibrord, with his characteristic humility, deprecated the idea, considering himself unworthy of so high a dignity, and as lacking the qualities set forth by St. Paul as essential to the character of a bishop. But the Duke still entreated, and was joined by many others in his appeal, so that at length Willibrord's scruples were overcome, and he bowed to the judgment of the many as expressing the Will of God. Presently he set out for Rome, one of a distinguished embassy, and bearing rich gifts for Pope Sergius.

Alcuin gravely informs us that four days before Willibrord's arrival in Rome the Pope had been apprised of his coming in a vision. The basis of fact in this story may well be that the Pope, in virtue of an extensive correspondence throughout the Western Church was cognisant of all that had been going on in Frisia, and that some messenger—or, it may be, an avant-courier of the embassy—had told him to expect a visit from Pippin's nominee to the See of Frisia. In any case, Sergius welcomed the missionary with great cordiality, shewed him every mark of esteem and honour, and proceeded without delay to confer upon him the dignity of the episcopate. The ceremony of consecration was performed by the Pope with the participation of numerous priests and in the presence of a large concourse of people. In token of his promotion to the office of bishop Willibrord received the name of Clement.

We might expect that with reference to an event of such central importance as Willibrord's consecration to an archbishopric our sources would have agreed regarding place and date. But this is far from being

the case. Thus, to begin with, the church in which the ceremony took place is given by Bede as St. Cecilia's, while Alcuin says St. Peter's ; on this point, as Bede was a contemporary of Willibrord, and had friends in common with him, and as Alcuin, without taking the trouble to ascertain the facts, would almost naturally associate the consecration with the universally known St. Peter's rather than with the less distinguished St. Cecilia's, we may decide with some conviction for the latter. As to the year again, Bede says 696 ; but here we have a more reliable witness than even the most veracious contemporary, viz., Willibrord himself, who in a marginal note in the famous Echternach Calendar (see Appendix B) gives the year of his consecration as 695. As regards the month there is no diversity of evidence in our sources : it was November ; but when we come to the day of the month we are once more confronted with variance, Bede giving St. Cecilia's Day, *i.e.*, the 22nd of November, while another note—evidently contemporary with the former—in the Calendar just mentioned, appears to indicate the 21st (St. Cecilia's *Eve*), and we are the more inclined to accept the latter because it fell on a Sunday, the day of the week upon which it was the practice from about the sixth century to celebrate such outstanding functions. From a full consideration of the data, accordingly, we may with something like certainty conclude that Willibrord was consecrated archbishop in the church of St. Cecilia on the 21st of November, 695.

The new name of Clement conferred upon Willibrord by the Pope as a seal of his exaltation may well have been suggested by the fact that the festival

of the great St. Clement of Rome, reputed to have been the third from St. Peter in the succession of the Roman bishops, fell on the next day but one (23rd Nov.) after the consecration. But the ecclesiastical did not permanently supersede the original English name (as *e.g.*, " Boniface " soon displaced " Winfrid ") for, while Willibrord's own note in the Echternach Calendar uses the form " Clement Willibrord," and the other has " our lord Clement," yet in time common usage settled in favour of " Willibrord " simply, without addition or alternative.

CHAPTER IX

Utrecht and Echternach

On Willibrord's second visit to Rome, he spent but fourteen days in the city. Returning to his field as Archbishop of the Frisians, he received from Pippin a place for the seat of his diocese in the fort of Wiltaburg or Utrecht. Here, in course of time, he erected the appropriate ecclesiastical fabrics, and from the first made the town a centre of widespread missionary activity among the Frisians, both within and beyond the now twice-extended Frankish boundary. Before speaking of his journeys, however, we shall deal briefly with the work of building which he now began to push forward in Utrecht, and also give some account of how, in this early stage of his episcopal career, he came to be put in trust of the second of his main religious centres, viz., Echternach.

Our information regarding his buildings at Utrecht is scanty, and in fact rather confused. As a historical

starting-point we may take the Chapel of St. Thomas erected there at least a century before, of which an onslaught of the Frisians appears to have left little more than the site. Near this (" prope," de Beka)—if we are to accept the ancient tradition—in the years between Willibrord's first and second visits to Rome, probably in 694, he had raised a second small church—the oratory of the Holy Cross,—and it was this which seems to have served as a nucleus for the more ample structures that he was to erect during the earlier years of his episcopate at Utrecht. Close to the Holy Cross Chapel, accordingly, he built a more spacious church, which he dedicated to the name of the Saviour (St. Salvator's), while at a later time he founded still another little church on the site of the ruined St. Thomas's (" a fundamento," Boniface), consecrating it in honour of St. Martin. (He made St. Salvator's his " cathedral " church, but, after his death, St. Martin's —the forerunner of the present minster—came to occupy the pre-eminent place. St. Salvator's, or its successor, was finally demolished in 1587; it was situated immediately to the south-west of St. Martin's, and between the two was the Holy Cross Chapel—believed to be the " St. Willibrord's Chapel " which was removed in 1826, and the site of which is marked by a single stone in the precincts of the long-removed St. Salvator's.) Willibrord also founded a monastery here, and this may have provided a place for his school, which was subsequently to become a great centre for the training of clergy.

The construction and due equipment of these ecclesiastical buildings could not be other than costly, but there is no reason to suppose that Willibrord had

ever a moment's anxiety about the resources upon which he could draw. With the place for Willibrord's seat, Pippin, in a charter now lost but confirmed by one drawn up under his grandson, King Pippin the Short, in 753, assigned to the bishopric one-tenth of the revenues due to the public treasury there. Besides, much of the labour required might be done at small cost by serfs, who are frequently referred to in official documents of the period. Soon, moreover, other sources began to flow; for, as Alcuin tells us, many of those whom Willibrord brought to the light laid their heritages at his feet, and among the churches and monasteries which this rich stream of donations enabled him to build and maintain, the institutions of his own episcopal seat would doubtless receive whatever was needed to supplement the grant of the major domus. The earliest to be recorded of these gifts to the bishop is one from a Count Gerbert about the year 696.

At a very early period of Willibrord's course as bishop, moreover—at a time indeed when his energies and his devotion were very fully tasked with the combined work of building and evangelisation—a fresh responsibility was laid upon him by a gift from a quarter not indicated in the above. His personality, and the single-mindedness, zeal, and initiative capacity with which he plied his manifold labours, had made a profound impression upon many who were from the first in sympathy with his aims, and were in a position to afford him material help. It was in this way that his name became indissolubly linked with the town of Echternach. Echternach is situated in Luxembourg, and, lying on the River Sure (a tributary of the Mosel),

not far from Trèves, it was well within the Frankish boundary, and a good hundred and sixty miles from Utrecht. At that time Irmina, said to have been a daughter of Dagobert II., was abbess of St. Mary's Convent at Oeren, near Trèves, and—doubtless in her own right—proprietrix of about one-half of Echternach, upon which property she had built churches in honour of the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, and the Apostles Peter and Paul, as also a little monastery (monasteriolum). In 697 or 698 she placed these several institutions under the control of Willibrord as abbot, assigning to him likewise the portion of land belonging to her, in and near the town. In 699 she made a further addition to the endowment of the monastery, and about the same time several others made gifts of property either to Willibrord himself or to the cloister of which he was now the head.

Willibrord was not slow to avail himself of these offerings, and soon the little monastery (of Echternach) was on the way to becoming a famous abbey. It is probable that he was the more ready to shoulder this new responsibility because he foresaw the possibility of trouble in the debatable zone that the Franks had recently taken from Radbod ; Utrecht, his episcopal seat, stood as an outpost upon its perilous northern verge, and if the Frisians, prompted by some turn of affairs to renew the hazard of war, should throw back the frontier, then Echternach would provide a secure harbourage for the Bishop and his fellow-labourers. Willingly enough, therefore, he became Abbot of Echternach ; moreover, he learned to love the place, and one might venture to say that, while Utrecht was his office, Echternach was his home.

Of the bounties conferred upon Echternach, however, barely the half has been told. In the year 704 the unstinting hand of Irmina conveys to the abbey and its head the village of Steinheim on the Sure, and also a vineyard at Trèves. Then, as Irmina had devised to the abbey *her* portion of Echternach, her example and Willibrord's own merits, as it would seem, soon served to secure the other moiety for the same object. That other portion had come into the hands of Duke Pippin and his wife Plectrude, and by a charter drawn up at Saargemünd (Lorraine) in 706 that exalted pair made over to the monastery of Echternach the demesne belonging to them in the town and its vicinity. In a purely material sense the gift is complete ; with the " half of Echternach " they give all the lands, buildings, inhabitants, slaves, bondmen (*laeti*), forests, fields, pastures, tilled grounds, waters and streams, movable and immovable property, mills, cattle—male and female—belonging to it " ; but they are careful to lay down the condition that the monastery should remain under the authority and protection of themselves and their heirs for ever. In a second deed of the same date they ratify Willibrord's headship of the monastery, and provide that when he dies, the monks are to have the right of choosing a new abbot from amongst themselves, such abbot, however, to be faithful to the house of Pippin, and the abbey to remain under its authority. The language of these provisions strikes one as having a rather dictatorial ring, and seems to ignore the fact that the monastery in question was erected by Irmina on her own land, and that she had been a liberal patroness of it. In point of fact, however, there is reason to believe that the implied

claims of Pippin and his consort rest upon good grounds, for we have some evidence tending to shew that Willibrord had previously divested himself of his rights in what Irmina had given him, and had transferred them to the ducal pair, so that when these drew up the charters cited they were in reality the legal proprietors of all Echternach and what pertained to it.

About the time of Irmina's last-noted gift (704), another came from the very heart of Germany. In that year Hedan, the last Duke of Thuringia, devised to Willibrord, absolutely and without conditions of any kind, a number of properties situated within his Duchy—in the district later to be rendered sacred to religion and literature by the great names of Luther and Goethe. At a later date, 717, Duke Hedan assigned to him also certain possessions in Hammelburg on the Saale, Lower Franconia, where, as the donor says, he proposed to found a monastery " according to the counsel of that apostolic man " (Willibrord). What already existing link between Willibrord and Hedan is implied by these donations, or what issued from them, we are not told, but we can read in them a testimony to a far-spreading appreciation of our missionary's character and work.

CHAPTER X

The Journey to the Danes ; Heligoland

From the time when Willibrord was appointed to Utrecht (695 or 696), he made that town a centre of wide-spread missionary enterprise. Unfortunately we have no clear or orderly account of his journeys. Alcuin, to whom we might have looked for information

on this side of the missionary's work, leaves us largely at a loss, and in fact actually complicates the matter by assigning the appointment to Utrecht to a date subsequent to Pippin's death and the accession of Charles Martel in 714, *i.e.*, at least eighteen years later than the date we have adopted, evidently meaning his readers to understand that during these years Willibrord's activities were still confined to a region politically Frankish. Waiving the question of date, however, we find Alcuin and Bede at one in saying that Willibrord's settlement at Utrecht greatly enlarged the scope of his work, that in the territories now open to him he met the challenge of heathenism with tireless energy and unflagging zeal, and that his labours were highly successful, since he not only instituted churches and appointed ministers in those parts, but turned multitudes from darkness to light ; Alcuin says, indeed, that he did not leave the smallest residue of ancient superstition to remain in darkness. These statements are no doubt meant to cover the whole period of Willibrord's career as bishop, but we shall hardly err in assuming that they indicate the trend of his work in Utrecht from the outset. In our next chapter we shall mention some of the localities visited by him, as recorded by Alcuin incidentally in connection with various signs and wonders wrought by the missionary. First of all, however, we shall speak of one great expedition in which he actually passed beyond the bounds of Frisia. Here Alcuin is our sole informant, and his account of the great venture has the double merit of being virtually free from the miraculous element of which he is so fond, and of being composed with a measure of detail that makes the occurrence

stand out as perhaps the most interesting in Willibrord's whole missionary career.

At some juncture when Radbod's obstinacy was causing obstruction to the Frisian mission, Willibrord resolved to make an expedition to the Danes, a group of tribes noted for their ferocity. Their ruler at that time was Ongendus, whose name, while authenticated so far by its occurrence in the primitive English epic of *Beowulf* in the form Ongentheow, is not found in any list of Danish kings—a fact from which we may infer that the tribes in question, though racially akin to the Danes proper living in Jutland and parts of the Scandinavian peninsula, were tribally or nationally distinct. Their country would lie on the further side of the Elbe estuary, probably in the district adjacent to the River Eider in the modern Slesvig-Holstein. A journey thither by land would have led through uncounted leagues of swamp and forest, to say nothing of the more remote and less civilised septs of the Frisians and the Saxons in that region, so that Willibrord and his party made the passage by ship. Ongendus received them peacefully, and does not seem to have interdicted their efforts to convert his people. Personally, it is true, he was inflexibly wedded to his own form of religion, and is described by Alcuin as fiercer than a wild beast and harder than any stone, so that Willibrord found himself unable to make the slightest impression upon him. Still, we find a rather odd commentary upon that harsh portrayal in the fact that this obdurate ruler permitted the missionary to get together thirty boys with a view to taking them home with him, and that, while yet on this unfriendly soil, Willibrord was allowed to instruct them in Christian

truth and to baptise them—his motive in this step being to ensure their soul's salvation in view of the dangers that would beset the journey back to Frisia. Nor were his anticipations of danger unrealised, for during the return voyage his vessel was caught by a storm, and the passengers were forced to make an unwished-for landing upon an island " on the boundary line between the Danes and the Frisians." This was in fact Heligoland, but was then known as Fosete's Land, containing as it did the sanctuary of Fosete, a deity holding high rank among the Frisians as the god of justice, and afterwards adopted by the Norsemen, who, fitting his name to their own language as Forseti (*i.e.*, pre-sident), made him one of the Ases, the son of Balder and Nanna, and assigned to him in heaven the hall Glitnir, where from his throne he dispensed judgment among his worshippers. In this sacred islet Willibrord and his companions rested for a few days in the hope of more favourable weather, and here they found sacrosanct cattle, to meddle with which was a crime, as also a well from which water was not to be drawn except in absolute silence. The intrepid missionary set both interdicts at naught : he had some of the cattle slaughtered for the needs of his party, and, invoking (aloud, we are to suppose) the Holy Trinity, baptised three men in the waters of the spring. The heathen spectators of these actions fully expected that the violators of their sacred objects would go mad, or fall down dead, but as neither contingency ensued, they ran panic-stricken to the king (Radbod), who at the time happened to be in the island, taking part doubtless in some religious ceremonial, and told him of what had taken place.

King Radbod, furious at the double sacrilege, decided that the outraged Fosete should be propitiated by blood ; such acts of profanation could be expiated only by the offering of a human life. But who was to be the victim ? In order to determine this, Radbod cast lots three times daily for three successive days ; but the lot did not fall upon Willibrord or any of the missionary band ; at last, however, the fatal contingency settled upon one of the party, who accordingly had to be surrendered as a sacrifice to the affronted deity, and so won the crown of martyrdom. It almost looks as if Radbod, enraged though he doubtless was, was really afraid to proceed to extremities against any individual belonging to the inner circle of Willibrord's own company ; and it was possibly with a view to allaying the resentment of his subjects that he at length selected a victim—one, as Alcuin's language seems to indicate, of lower standing. This bad business over, he summoned Willibrord to his presence, and reproached him bitterly for the indignities he had heaped upon the deity of the island. Willibrord replied as incisively : " The god whom you worship is no god at all, but a devil," and proceeded to set forth in clear terms the benefits that flow from the worship of the one true God and the dire retribution awaiting the adherents of all false religion. Radbod, unconvinced though not unmoved, allowed the missionary to go in peace, and even speeded the parting guest with tokens of honour.

CHAPTER XI

Travels and miracles

Willibrord was Bishop of Utrecht for forty-four years, and we have every reason to believe that until old age began to sap his strength he allowed himself little respite in his varied and wide-spread labours. Journeying, preaching, visiting, planting and organising churches and monasteries: for at least the third of a century these activities must surely have filled to overflowing the life of a bishop whose diocese lay mainly among heathen. Unfortunately, however, his actual movements and proceedings during that long period are but little known to us, nor is it easy to articulate what we know in a satisfying chronological scheme. It is true that the known political events of the time—the conflicts of peoples and their leaders, the ups and downs of dynasties—in many cases reacted upon Willibrord's life and work, but they rarely throw light upon his personal doings; and, again, while we fortunately possess a number of precisely dated documents recording conveyances of property to him or his institutions, these also generally fail to indicate what he himself was engaged in at the time. It is true also that the latter half of Alcuin's "Life of Willibrord," besides telling of extensive missionary enterprise on his part, refers to various particular journeys undertaken by him, and recounts in some detail—largely tinged with the miraculous—the incidents that took place while he was so engaged; but the book seldom links these occurrences with places, and never at all with dates. Hence, in seeking to

connect the incidents given with definite points or periods in Willibrord's episcopate, we are for the most part left to mere conjecture ; in a few cases we can determine the time approximately, but in most we must either fall back upon general considerations, or be content with the order (or lack of order) in which the incidents are given.

Thus it is fairly certain that the event recorded by Alcuin in ch. 21 belongs to the earliest years of Willibrord's career as bishop. In a nunnery in Trèves a sore pestilence had broken out. Many of the sisters had died, while others lay in a grave condition, and most of the rest were a prey to terror and despair. A call for help was sent to Willibrord, who at the time happened to be at Echternach. He came without delay, celebrated the mass for the sick, used consecrated water to sprinkle upon the afflicted dwellings and to give as a potion to the sufferers, with the result that, as Alcuin says, the sick recovered and no further deaths took place. Now we are told in the life of Irmina that the monastery in question was Irmina's own, in Oeren, and that, when the message was dispatched to Willibrord, he had just come from Utrecht to Echternach and was engaged in the founding of the new monastery there. The incident, accordingly, must have taken place not long after Irmina had conveyed to him her Echternach property (698).

Willibrord's visits to Echternach would be events of frequent occurrence. It was, as Alcuin says, " his own monastery," and duty and affection would often conspire to bring him there. His biographer mentions one other visit, in the course of which, as he passed

through the several apartments to see what might be amended, he found but a scanty supply of wine in the cellar. With a prayer he thrust his staff into the ill-supplied cask. During the night the wine rose in the vessel, and filled it to overflowing. This story is given by Alcuin in ch. 18, *i.e.*, before his account of the visit noted above ; but clearly it belongs to a later time, since the monastery was now in working order.

The visit to the island of Walcheren mentioned by Alcuin in ch. 14 we would assign on general grounds to a very early period. Walcheren is not far from Antwerp, being part of the straggling delta formed by the Rhine, the Maas, and the Scheldt as they debouch upon the North Sea, and, as it lay in an important commercial district, it had a claim for an early visit. Finding an idol there, Willibrord proceeded to demolish it. Thereupon the custodian of the image struck fiercely at the missionary's head with a sword, but the blow fell harmless. Willibrord's companions seized the assailant, and were about to make him pay for his truculence with his blood, when their leader, deprecating all such violence, freed him from their hands and let him go. But divine vengeance effected the retribution which the wrath of man was not permitted to carry out : for the offender fell under the power of the evil one, and died miserably three days later.

On another occasion we find Willibrord engaged in evangelizing certain districts on the sea coast. Noticing one day that his helpers were sorely pressed by want of fresh water, he called upon one of them to make a small trench in his tent. Here Willibrord prayed for water, and at once a spring broke forth and

filled the trench. An old chronicler, John of Beka, says that this spring was to be found in the district of Heyligelo, now Heilo, in North Holland, and in his day was called St. Willibrord's Well.

The only other definite locality mentioned by Alcuin (ch. 15) as having been visited by Willibrord is Susteren, and we know from other sources that this visit cannot have taken place before the year 714. In contrast to the places just mentioned, Susteren lies far inland, being situated on a stream now called the Geleen, but then the Suestra, which was the original name of the town as well; it is in Dutch Limburg, not far from the River Maas and about halfway between Maastricht and Roermond. The town is mentioned in a document of 712, in which a certain Ansbald, monk of Suestra, grants his paternal inheritance on the River Dommel to Willibrord; but in 714 Pippin and his wife Plectrude assigned to Willibrord an oratory and a cell, with adjoining ground, in Suestra itself. They stipulated that the edifices were to be rebuilt, and laid down other conditions closely resembling those under which they had made over to him their portion of Echternach. The new monastery was to be open even to monks who came to it as strangers; Pippin's supervision was expressly reserved, then that of the sons of Drogo and Grimoald, and their heirs for ever; after Willibrord's death, the resident monks were to have the right of electing his successor. It is quite clear that the major domus meant to keep the suzerainty of the cloister within his own family. If Alcuin is right in calling the institution a "little cell," the visit of Willibrord probably took place shortly after the date of conveyance, *i.e.*, at a

time when the larger structure was not yet in existence.

On one occasion, then, as Willibrord and his company were on the way to his cell at Susteren, he had the unpleasant experience of being rudely insulted. He had taken a short cut by a path leading through the cornfields of a certain rich man. This rich man does not himself appear upon the scene, but the servant who watched the fields saw trespass in the act of the missionary band, and, with the domineering rudeness of the menial, spoke words of bitter insult and scorn to Willibrord. Once again Willibrord had to restrain his incensed followers from taking summary vengeance upon the offender, who, however, though spared for the moment, was not suffered by divine justice to escape the penalty of his sacrilege, for he died suddenly the day after the encounter.

We take occasion here to say something regarding the miracles of which Willibrord during his lifetime is reported to have been more or less directly the instrument, and with them we conjoin the series of marvels, mainly cures of disease, associated with his dead body or his relics, and ascribed to his intercession in heaven (Alcuin, ch. 14-23 ; 25-30). To discuss the truth of such narratives is now rightly regarded as superfluous. The survey and investigation of a wide field of human tradition have shown us how such stories arise and grow in an atmosphere of uncritical belief, often miscalled faith, and also how the uncritical belief itself, especially in the matter of healings, tends to produce super-normal results. Thus the modern mind inclines to concede the possibility of a nucleus of fact at the core of the alleged wonders, but at the same time denies that such element of fact is, in the

ordinary sense of the term, supernatural. Thus, too, we can read the accounts of such things without questioning the veracity of the narrators, or suspecting imposture on the part of those concerned in the actual experiences.

In the case of the wonders ascribed to Willibrord it is interesting to notice that Alcuin, who doubtless believed sincerely in the miracles he recounts, nevertheless refers to them almost in a tone of apology, and falls into some confusion of thought with regard to them. He tells us, first, that the ministry of the Gospel is to be preferred to all working of miracles, and then speaks of these signs as being vouchsafed by God; that is to say he appears to rank facts that might be explained by human agency higher than facts believed to be due to the direct operation of divine power, evidently failing to see that the latter class of facts, if they happen at all, must be credited with a significance not less than tremendous, and infinitely beyond that of even the most extraordinary results of preaching the word.

The stories of Willibrord's miracles may perhaps be taken as an evidence of the high place that he held in the minds of his contemporaries and those of the generations following: his personality was deemed worthy of being a vehicle of divine power. The healings said to have been wrought by him are a witness to his nobility and consecration of character. What is best of all, however, is that, in the miracles of retribution, the avenging blow does not come from him (except in the single case where he sentences a boor to a year's inability to drink), and that his general attitude to gainsayers and aggressors breathes the very spirit of

the Gospels, recalling Him who, when His disciples asked for summary vengeance upon certain offenders, chid them as not knowing what manner of spirit they were of.

CHAPTER XII

Old friends and new

Of the eleven men who accompanied Willibrord in the expedition to Frisia the only one who stands out as a distinct and relatively definite figure is Suidbert, who, as we saw, was chosen to act as their bishop. The names of two or three others of the group are found floating in an obscure and uncertain tradition. Thus we hear of a certain Adalbert, who was venerated at the town of Egmond, in the province of North Holland, as one of Willibrord's companions, and it is likely enough that this is the same Abbot Adalbert whose signature appears in the deed of Pippin drawn up in Willibrord's favour in 714; on the other hand, the Adalbert or Aldberct who succeeded Willibrord as abbot of Echternach in 739, and died in 775 or 777, must, in view of the late date, almost certainly have been a different person. In Elst, Gelderland, again, which was devised by Charles Martel to the Church of St. Salvator, Utrecht, in 726, a monk of English birth named Werenfried was revered as patron saint of the place, and it is reported that this Werenfried was charged by Willibrord with the task of preaching the Word in that district and in a church near the Rhine. It is possible that these two may have belonged to Willibrord's original company, or may have been

among those who afterwards joined it, but the definite link of connection is not found in our more trustworthy sources.

In the reference just made to those from Britain who afterwards attached themselves to Willibrord, we are reminded that the leader of the Frisian mission, who left his native land in his twentieth year, and never returned to it, still maintained some measure of intercourse with the churches there. We have already alluded to the visit of Wilfrid, who in the course of his third journey to Rome (703 or 704) stayed with Willibrord for a time, Acca and others being of the company. The relations between Wilfrid and Willibrord were close and intimate, the younger man being spoken of as the " son " of the older, but while the meeting of such friends must have been a joy and satisfaction to them, the sole distinct memorial of the event is the story of healing preserved by Bede in witness of the sanctity of King Oswald of Northumbria. About the same time, as we are told in the prose " Lives of St. Cuthbert,"—one of them by Bede—a member of Willibrord's " family " in Frisia made a journey to Lindisfarne, and, falling sick during his visit, was restored to health at Cuthbert's tomb. Of the visits of Winfrid or Boniface, and his two years' sojourn with Willibrord at Utrecht, we shall speak more fully in the sequel ; meanwhile we mention another monk " of the people of the Angles," namely, Marchelm, who in his maturity became a friend and associate of Liudger, and in the " Life of Liudger " is said to have been from his youth a pupil of Willibrord.

Here, too, we must make mention of a personality that comes before us with considerable clearness as a

member of Willibrord's household at Echternach, viz., the presbyter Laurentius, who seems to have acted for a time as his amanuensis. Laurentius was a noted penman ; and, besides writing out at least three charters conveying properties to Willibrord, he drew up the splendid and valuable Echternach copy of the Hieronymian Martyrology (see Appendix B), and also a fine MS. of the Gospels, now to be found in a library at Maihingen, near Wallerstein, in mid Franconia. The form of script which these works shew is that commonly seen in manuscripts executed by Anglo-Saxon writers ; but this cannot be ranked as a decisive proof of the Echternach scribe's English or British origin, for he may quite well have been a pupil of Anglo-Saxon monks on the continent, and so, naturally, have formed his handwriting on the pattern of theirs.

We do not know whether Willibrord was ever affected with the home-sickness of the exile, or whether the coming and going of his English friends, with the familiar accents of Northumbria upon their tongues, ever caused him to long for the hills and dales of Yorkshire, or the old comradeship of Ripon. His hands were so filled with work in his adopted land, and his soul was so fully given to it, that he had probably no time for brooding, and perhaps no proclivity. Yet if such longings ever came over him, they must surely have yielded swiftly to gratitude for the compensations that had been so richly meted out to him, for the troops of friends that he had won, and for the lavish gifts heaped upon him. Far and near he found men and women ready to lay the most magnificent offerings at his feet. This was the case not only with prominent or aristocratic people like

Pippin and Plectrude, like Hedan, Duke of Thuringia, and the Abbess Irmina of Horrea (Oeren), and, later—as we shall see—Charles Martel, but also with many of less note, who, in fact, would never have been heard of in our time had not their names been preserved in the deeds of gift which they drew up for Willibrord's behoof. A number of these obscurer donors have been already referred to ; others will be noticed later ; meanwhile we cite a few from the middle period of his career, though, not wishing to load the page with precise details regarding the locality or nature of the properties conveyed, we give merely the names of the givers and the dates of their gifts. Thus we hear of Aengilbald, in 703 or 704, Aengelbert, in 709 and 713, Bertelindis, in 710, and Ansbald, in 712 and 717, as having devised to him various lands, with houses, woods, waters, etc., and sometimes with bond-servants and cattle. All these properties, with many others similarly assigned to Willibrord, are situated in the district known as Texandria—roughly North Brabant, to the west of the Maas ; and the gifts are so numerous that Willibrord must have become almost the greatest land-owner in that region. The revenues of these possessions were to be at his disposal for the support of his institutions ; the lands bestowed offered scope for the planting of churches and the expansion of the Word, and could also serve as places of retreat and refuge when unconverted Frisia was behaving harshly to the Christian converts whose lot was cast among them. Many of these gifts were placed at Willibrord's absolute discretion ; safely enough, doubtless, for in all we know of him, there is never the shadow of a suggestion that he called anything his own, or knew what it was to have a privy purse.

CHAPTER XIII

A FAMILY OF HELPERS

THE fact that Alcuin in his " Life of Willibrord " takes little note of either time or place is unfortunately matched by his almost complete silence regarding the living men and women with whom the missionary came into contact. It is true that we hear of certain rulers—friendly or hostile—Pippin, Charles, Radbod, Ongend ; of a few representatives of the pagan cults to which his presence in the country was a challenge and a threat ; but, if we know of Wilfrid and Acca, or of the great Boniface, as having sojourned with him for a time, it is not to Alcuin that we owe these gleams of living interest. Most of all to be regretted, however, is the failure to bring before us concrete cases of conversion ; there is not a word about individual persons or families brought by Willibrord to the true light, such as we find, for instance, in the brief records of St. Paul's journeys ; and here Bede fails us equally with Alcuin.

These things being so, we cannot but rejoice that research among other documents of the age has elicited a few particulars that help to fill the blank. The actual details are few, but they are wonderfully illuminating, not only as regards the conditions in which Willibrord did his work, but also as regards certain aspects of the work itself and what results accrued from it. Of such extra sources, the palm must be accorded to Altfrid's " Life of Liudger."

Liudger was Bishop of Münster, in Westphalia, from *c.* 803 till 809 ; he was, however, by birth a

Frisian, having been born near Utrecht about the year 743, *i.e.*, four or five years after Willibrord's death. Both his father and his mother belonged to Christian families of some repute, and what we are to say regarding these families will show that their Christian standing was mainly due to the evangelising activities of Willibrord himself.

We begin with Liudger's paternal grandfather, Wurssing. Towards the close of the eighth century Wurssing was one of the magnates of Frisia, a landed proprietor and, as it would seem, a judge. He was a friend of the poor and the oppressed, and, as one who had no "respect of persons in judgment," defended the truth against all assailants, so bringing himself into collision with the autocratic Radbod, who was at this time pursuing a policy of oppression and confiscation amongst his own people. Was it the expanding spirit of Christianity that provoked the king to such violence? As regards Wurssing himself, it is true, we are told that he had not yet attained to belief in the Holy Trinity, but even these words—to say nothing of his life and conduct—suggest that he was sympathetic towards the Christian religion, and that, in befriending the oppressed and battling for the truth, he was in reality defending the Faith. In any case, he had at length to flee for his life and leave his lands to the spoiler. He sought an asylum at the court of Neustria, where he was well received by Grimoald, son of Pippin, who was at that time major domus in the western part of the Frankish Kingdom. Here Wurssing and his wife Adalgard gave their full allegiance to Christianity, as did their children after them, and here the family were content to remain even after the death of Grimoald.

A few years later, Radbod, who had meanwhile undergone some stern schooling at the hands of Charles Martel, and was now in the grip of bodily disorder as well, invited Wurssing to return to Frisia, promising not only to restore his lands, but to add fresh largess to him. The exile would not comply ; but when the king in a further overture asked him to send his son instead, he agreed, and accordingly Theatgrim, Wurssing's younger son, went and took possession of the long expropriated estates. Then, some time after Radbod's death, the rest of the family came, settled near Utrecht, and, what is of special significance for our present purpose, gave themselves heartily to the service of the Gospel under Willibrord ; while Wurssing's two sons, Nothgrim and Theatgrim, and his three surviving daughters, were in due course all united in marriage with believers.

Theatgrim's wife was one Liafburg, and as she was to become the mother of Liudger, we may now say a little about her family-tree. Her parents were Nothrad and Adelburg, who were Christians, and likewise people of position. In particular, Adelburg was an active supporter of Willibrord, and had already committed to his care her two brothers, Willibracht and Thiatbracht, who were to be trained for the clerical office : these two were in fact the first native Frisians to hold such a position in the Church. Nothrad's mother, however, still clung to the old superstitions, and was ready to practise heathen cruelties when she thought fit. Thrown into a fume by the birth of Liafburg—which added to the household but another daughter, when as yet there were no sons—she resolved to do away with the infant. This had to be

done, according to the pagan ethics of Frisia, before the child had tasted nourishment, and the hired wretches of the old crone carried it off immediately after its birth, and threw it into a vat filled with water. It so happened, however, that a woman who lived near came upon the scene, and seeing what mischief was afoot, seized the child, ran with it to her house, and put a little honey in its mouth, so that when its would-be slayers came up, she was able to defy them by showing that the infant had taken food. Later generations saw in all this the profound working of divine providence; Liafburg was thus preserved to become, as the wife of Theatgrim, the mother of two eminent bishops and of the abbess Heriburga, as also the ancestress of others who rose to distinction in the Church.

Altfrid's sketch of Bishop Liudger's forbears, which we have tried to summarise in the foregoing paragraphs—though in it, naturally, Willibrord is an accessory rather than a central figure—affords a welcome relief from the mere blur of general statements given by others as regards the conversions which our missionary effected, or the baptisms which he performed. Here are over a dozen actual breathing persons—most of them distinguished by name—influenced by Willibrord, taking their stand beside him, being instructed by him, living in friendly intercourse with him. Here the sinister figure of Radbod himself stands out with a more distinct contour; it is a pity that the added details set him in so sinister a light. The lads Willibracht and Thiatbracht, who were sent by their sister to Willibrord's school, give a more vivid interest to that seminary, and we

may permit ourselves to think of them as contracting youthful friendships among the thirty Danish boys whom he brought home from his great northern expedition. Moreover, it is specially worth noting that the two families mainly concerned were people of substance and position ; they belonged to Frisia's aristocracy, such as it was ; and they may presumably be taken as examples of what Willibrord's work was effecting in that stratum of society. Besides, as persons of rank and influence, they were able in turn to strengthen his hands and further his purposes ; for, in addition to the direct assistance which they gave him, their Christian walk and conversation must have acted as a powerful leaven amongst their servants and other dependants. Altogether, the sketch, covering as it does a period of, say, thirty years, affords us a glimpse of the evangelisation of Southern Frisia that we could ill do without.

CHAPTER XIV

Historical ; the work arrested

In a previous chapter (v.) we dealt in a general way with the social and political relations and inter-relations of Franks and Frisians in the lands where Willibrord was to find his life-work, and we noted in particular, as outstanding and dominating features of the situation, the rise of the powerful and ambitious Pippin to the actual rulership of the Franks, and, on the Frisian side, the fear of Frankish encroachment and the suspicion of everything—Christianity not least—that might smooth the way for it. We would now cast a cursory

glance at the march of events in the political sphere as it may have reacted upon Willibrord's doings, referring briefly also to the leading personalities who by their attitude and their actions influenced his own proceedings for good or ill.

Undoubtedly the most potent political force of the time was the Pippin whose name has occurred so often in our narrative: Pippin of Héristal, at first major domus of the kings of Austrasia, the Eastern division of the Frankish nation, and then, after his victory at Testry in 687, virtually ruler over the western part as well, *i.e.*, Neustria, the "newest" or latest conquest of the Franks. Allusion has likewise been made to his wife Plectrude or Blithryda; the viceregal pair had two sons, Drogo and Grimoald, the former of whom died in 708, while the latter, said to have been a man of mild and gentle character, became major domus of Neustria—under his father's ægis, no doubt,—and in 711 married Teutsind, the daughter of Radbod, King of Frisia. This alliance may well have been the seal of some mitigation in the long-standing animosity between the two nationalities, and probably afforded Willibrord a wider scope for his efforts to diffuse the Gospel among the Frisians. But the year 714 proved a fatal one for the truce. First of all, Grimoald was assassinated by a Frisian named Rantgar; then, towards the close of the year, Pippin himself died; the Franco-Frisian peace gave place to war, and the Frankish kingdom itself was plunged into anarchy.

Can we reckon Pippin of Héristal a sincere friend of Willibrord? In spite of all that may be said in support of a negative answer to this question, the present writer would take the positive side. Pippin's

gifts to the missionary, if not lavish, were considerable : a seat at Utrecht, the half of Echternach, the abbey of Susteren with its associated properties—the last of these, let us remember, being assigned on the grantor's death-bed. That in two cases he reserves his, or his heirs', rights of control has been interpreted as implying a begrudged and calculating liberality, and has been advanced to buttress the view that he disliked Willibrord for his loyalty to the Roman see, the growing authority of which, it is held, Pippin felt to be inimical to his own. On the whole, however, the facts seem to bear out the view that Pippin regarded his own powers in the ecclesiastical sphere as not necessarily incompatible with the Roman supremacy ; and the subsequent development of the relations between his successors and the Popes appear to endorse the theory. He was no saint ; he was a worldling and was given to scheming, but everything conspires to show that he sincerely respected Willibrord, and never attempted either to intrigue against him or to use him as a mere tool. His donations to the missionary may accordingly be taken at something more than even their face value ; they were tokens of his esteem and regard for a character morally and spiritually immeasurably superior to his own.

Before his death, Pippin had, just as if he had been a king, divided his realm, and cast the parts of those who were to succeed him. His three grandsons—all minors—were to be mayors of the palace, one in Neustria and two in Austrasia, while Plectrude was for the time to act as regent in name of all three ; a son named Karl—the Charles Martel to be,—the offspring of an irregular union with a certain Alpais,

was passed over. One of Plectrude's first measures was to place this Charles under lock and key in Cologne ; the eagle was cooped up in order that the barn-door fowls might be safe in their runs. But the leading ranks of the Frankish kingdom wanted none of the accredited brood, and Neustria in especial asserted its independence of the entire Pippin line. For a time chaos reigned. And Radbod of Frisia, as he watched with grim satisfaction the turmoil among his hereditary enemies, felt that the hour had struck for the redemption of his lost territory. With shrewd statecraft he concluded a treaty with Neustria, and then with a well-manned fleet proceeded up the Rhine to Cologne, where Plectrude was trying to maintain her rights in Austrasia. At that moment Charles escaped from confinement, and, mustering what he could of the Austrasian army, prepared to meet the on-coming Frisians. The engagement was a sharp one, but Charles was defeated. Then Frisians and Neustrians combined their forces, and invested Cologne ; but eventually, harassed by the guerilla tactics of Charles, and tempted by a large bribe from Pippin's coffers, they found it best to raise the siege and withdraw. This event gave Charles his chance. Compelling Plectrude to surrender her deceased husband's treasure-chest, he assembled his forces once more, defeated the Neustrians in three successive battles, and compelled Radbod to keep the peace.

Where, in this stormy time, was Willibrord ? Not, certainly, at Utrecht ; for Radbod had seized the opportunity of retrieving all that district, sealing the transaction by razing its altars and driving out those who served them. Willibrord and at least some of his

fellow-labourers took refuge in Echternach, so that his acceptance of that place as a second centre now stood him in good stead, and all the more so because he could find a field of service in the as yet imperfectly Christianized district of Texandria. Here he must have spent two or three years ; and it must have been during that period that he was invited to baptize Charles's infant son (born *c.* 715), who in the course of years was to succeed his father as mayor of the palace, and eventually to become the first king of a new dynasty as Pippin I., surnamed the Short. This baptism was an event of good omen as between Willibrord and Charles, for the friendly relations thus inaugurated were maintained to the end.

As the star of Charles rose higher and higher, Radbod's flickered and declined. We hear of physical disorder in the Frisian King's later years ; chagrin and dejection also played their part in making him a spent force, and he died in 719. In Radbod one feature stands out pre-eminent, viz., his love of his country, with which was associated, naturally enough, hatred of the Franks. Alcuin speaks of his " heart of stone," but the reference is to his unyielding antagonism to Christianity, and we have seen how that attitude might seem a quite justifiable policy to a patriotic king of the " free Frisians." Altfrid's indictment is a much graver one—murder and expropriation. These are, doubtless, dreadful crimes, and stain Radbod's character with a darker tint ; yet it is only fair to remember that such atrocities were but too common even in Christian Francia, the government of which has been stigmatised as " a despotism steeled by assassination." On the whole, we cannot speak of this

tragic figure as a mere savage. It would appear indeed from an all-round consideration of the facts, that there was something in the man to which Christianity made a strong appeal, and that he had many an inward prompting to accept it. It is told that on his deathbed he sent for Willibrord to come and baptize him, but that Willibrord came too late—when Radbod had just died ; and even if this story be a later fabrication, it indicates at least that Christian eyes had seen in him something besides mere antagonism. The uncompleted baptism at the hands of Wulfram—which, as already said, we incline to think historical—seems to betoken a mind that had its seasons of relenting. Radbod's recall of Wurssing from his exile in Francia, and his generous reception of Theatgrim, look like acts of penitence and atonement. Most decisive of all, however, is his treatment of Willibrord ; for while the ruler frequently had the missionary at his mercy, his dealings with him were always dignified, often kindly, and never unworthy of a prince. Radbod was succeeded by his son, Aldgils II., a declared Christian, and his accession virtually laid the whole of Frisia open to the evangelising activities of Willibrord, who now returned, or had recently returned, to Utrecht. It was in this greatly augmented diocese that he now carried forward that widespread and successful planting of the word which is set forth in glowing terms by both Bede and Alcuin. Thus Bede (v. 11 near the end) tells us that Willibrord preached far and wide, drew many from their errors, built numerous churches and not a few monasteries, and 'constituted' bishops ; while Alcuin, as previously noted, speaks of his having illuminated the whole land with the Truth.

We need not imagine that these words imply a complete moral and spiritual revolution among the Frisian people. But it was a great gain that the external barriers were removed and that the Word had now full scope: the people whose very name seemed to carry a pledge of liberty had now a chance of deliverance from a bondage that did not irk them, and of securing a freedom they had not dreamt of.

CHAPTER XV

Boniface comes to help

While the imbroglio ensuing upon the death of Pippin was still in full play, and Willibrord was, as it would seem, finding refuge in Echternach, the stream of gifts continued to flow. In 715 or 716, Arnulf, the son of Drogo and therefore the grandson of Pippin—and one of the juvenile mayors of Austrasia—assigned his paternal inheritance in Bollendorf, situated about five miles up the Sure from Echternach, to the abbey and church of the latter place. Then from far-off Thuringia came word of another donation: Duke Hedan's second gift, as noted at the end of chap. ix. Finally, Charles himself, not to be outdone by his nephew Arnulf, and while still clearing his own way to the headship of the Franks, granted to Willibrord's institutions at Echternach that portion of the Bollendorf properties which had come to him from Pippin.

During this disturbed period another figure comes upon the scene in Frisia, namely Winfrid, who was to become the great Boniface alluded to in our first chapter as the Apostle of Germany. Like

Willibrord, he was of English birth, though of Saxon, not Anglian lineage, having been born about 680 at Crediton, near the western limit of Wessex. He is said to have been related to the royal house of Wessex, but his spiritual kinship was with men like Willibrord and Ecgberct the monk of Rathmelsigi. The missionary spirit began to burn in him at an early age, and like these men he dreamt of the waiting fields beyond the sea, and at first especially of Frisia, where dwelt the nearest kinsmen of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. In 716, with two or three companions he made his way to London, and, taking ship there, came prosperously to Dorostat, now Wijk-bij-Duurstede, a great commercial emporium of that time. Presently he sought an opportunity of meeting Radbod at Utrecht, and of asking the king's sanction for a missionary campaign among his people ; but at the interview that followed, Radbod absolutely refused to permit of any such thing, and Winfrid was compelled to return to his own country. From what has already been said, we may be certain that Winfrid had not upon this occasion any chance of meeting Willibrord.

Two years later, however, he set out upon a still longer journey—to Rome—where he hoped to obtain the blessing of Pope Gregory II. upon his projected work among the Germanic tribes. Landing at Cuentawic (near Étaples) he made his way south-eastwards to " the thresholds of Blessed Peter the Apostle "—the papal cast of this phrase should be noted,—and was cordially received by Gregory. The Pope was favourably impressed by his visitor, and gave him a letter approving of his plans and authorising him

to carry the Christian Faith to any peoples who were still living in the darkness of heathenism. In the superscription of this document Winfrid becomes "Boniface the dutiful (or 'devout,' *religiosus*) priest."

On his return journey, Boniface—as we must now call him—passed through Thuringia, and then struck north-westwards into Frankish territory, whence, learning that 'the persecution due to the fierce King Radbod was now at an end,' he made his way along the Rhine to Utrecht, and there joined Willibrord, who had just returned to his sorely despoiled see. The visit of Boniface could not have been better timed; never did Willibrord stand in such need of help and solace as now. The visible outcome of twenty years' work lay trampled in the dust: buildings destroyed or dismantled, a well-developed ministry swept away, converts dispersed or re-paganised, heathen shrines and rites restored. Willibrord, now in his 62nd year, may well have been discouraged, and all the more would he welcome the proffered succour of the younger man. The pair grappled boldly with the situation, and in two years or less succeeded in making good the damage wrought in the heathen revolt. Of the intercourse of the two missionaries during this time we know nothing; not a word of their communings, except as to Willibrord's offer, and Boniface's refusal, of the co-episcopate, has come down to us, not a detail of their joint labours; for the tradition of their having consecrated two women, Harlindis and Reinula, in the abbey of Alteneik on the Maas, is hardly to the purpose.

It was Willibrord's hope and persistently expressed desire that Boniface would accept episcopal

consecration, and remain in Frisia as his official co-adjutor, with the prospect of eventually succeeding to the archbishopric. Boniface, however, felt constrained to refuse, though one of his objections, viz., that he had not reached the canonical age of fifty, could not have counted much with Willibrord, who had been raised to the archiepiscopal dignity when still under forty—and that, moreover, by a Pope. He was on firmer ground when he pleaded that the Pope's commission directed him to more purely heathen peoples than the inhabitants of Willibrord's diocese could now fairly be said to be. So the two friends parted (721-722), Boniface making his way towards the interior parts of Germany, while Willibrord remained in Frisia, engaged in consolidating what had been twice won for the Faith, and in seeking to extend its conquests further.

A fresh series of gifts fell to Willibrord about this time. In 721 a certain magnate named Herelaef gave him various lands and houses for the Church of Saints Peter and Paul and St. Lambert—built by the last named—at Bakel in the Peel, North Brabant ; and in the same year, or the year following, a count named Ebroin devised to him nine different properties for the behoof of a church at Rindern, in the district of Cleves (Kleve). The most important donation of this time, however, was one from the hands of the mayor of the palace himself, and as it bore directly upon Willibrord's own seat and person, it demands special attention here.

We have indicated that after Radbod's death Willibrord resumed his former position in Utrecht. Alcuin's words (ch. 13), however, conveying as they do the idea that Willibrord was appointed to the See of

Utrecht under Charles, and omitting all reference to any previous settlement under Pippin, may be taken to imply that there was something of a formal re-appointment in Charles's time. Then on the 1st of January, 723, this proceeding received a material ratification in a charter conveying to Willibrord on behalf of the monastery in Utrecht a considerable amount of property that was at Charles's disposal, viz., all lands, etc., belonging to the public treasury in or near the town, a pasture at Gravelines (dép. Nord, France), and the village and castle of Fethna (*i.e.*, Vechten, near Utrecht). But the document in question is specially remarkable for the fact that in it Charles applies to Willibrord a title that the latter never bears in any other charter of the time, viz., Archbishop. It is true that both Bede and Alcuin represent him as having been consecrated archbishop by the Pope ; and the fact that he is generally styled " bishop " simply, is in full accordance with the usage of that period. Accordingly we must not infer from Charles's use of the term archbishop in 723 that Willibrord was raised to the higher dignity about that time ; he had in fact been an archbishop from the year 695. The title of archbishop, however, was then just coming into general use, and Charles may have employed it on this occasion because he thought that his ratification of Willibrord's resumption of his see at Utrecht was a matter of such importance as to justify the use of the less trite and more imposing term.

We may here deal with the question whether the term ' archbishop ' as applied to Willibrord signifies that he was a metropolitan, *i.e.*, a bishop having the over-sight of a number of suffragan bishops. This certainly

seems to have been the view of Bede, and probably also of Alcuin. Both writers not only speak of Willibrord as having been consecrated an archbishop, but, while Alcuin merely says that several of his original companions received episcopal consecration, Bede states explicitly that Willibrord "constituted antistites" (the plural form of "antistes," a word used by Bede in the same chapter as denoting a bishop, viz., Suidbert) from amongst those who went with him to Frisia, or who afterwards came to him. Here, accordingly, we seem to have the necessary personnel of an organised ecclesiastical province, *i.e.*, a primate and his suffragans. Unfortunately, however, we have no quite definite details regarding the subordinate bishops, and no positive evidence that the Frisian province was divided into dioceses in Willibrord's day; while, had such dioceses and their bishops been actually constituted under Willibrord, it would be strange that the archiepiscopal office in Frisia should not have been—as it certainly was not—continued after his death. Nevertheless these negative considerations can hardly be allowed to over-ride the plain and unequivocal language of Bede, a contemporary who had every opportunity of knowing the facts, and who, as a writer, is little given to the grandiose. Moreover, there are at least hints of evidence that seem to favour Bede's statement. Thus the shadowy Theutbert, whose name appears in an ancient copy of Livy as bishop of Dorostat—were we but sure of his date—might be counted as one of Willibrord's suffragans; while the co-adjutor or "chor-episcopus" appointed by him in his declining years may—though not in a subordinate diocese— have been regarded as another. We must

also remember the poverty of the extant record, and bear in mind how much has slipped through its broken reticulations. Our conclusion accordingly is that Willibrord was a metropolitan, an archbishop in the fullest sense of the word, and that therefore Pippin's plan of making him the head of a new province of the Church was, for the time, actually realised.

CHAPTER XVI

Last years and death

From the time when Charles applied to Willibrord the title of archbishop until the death of the missionary there was a period of about seventeen years, but that fairly long stretch of time yields very few glimpses of the man himself. As Boniface, in a letter to Pope Stephen II., says that Willibrord continued to preach down to " infirm old age," we may assume that in the earlier portion of these seventeen years, the aging missionary went on with his work of consolidating and expanding the Church, and it is possible that he or his agents carried the Gospel to a considerable distance beyond the Zuider Zee—then merely Lake Flevo ; but there is no evidence that there was any enduring Christian foundation in these more northerly parts at this time. The political situation in Frisia had again become insecure. In 726 King Aldgils II. seems to have reverted to heathenism, and to have made another stand against Frankish ascendancy ; but Charles soon suppressed what he doubtless regarded as a rebellion. It may have been in connection with this victory that the major domus in the same year gave Willibrord the

village of Elst, in the Betuwe, between Arnhem and Nijmegen ; the gift was for the behoof of St. Salvator's, Utrecht, though the full legal rights of the property were vested in the bishop and his successors. Likewise in 726, a certain " distinguished " man named Rauchingus—who bears, moreover, the distinction of having been the donor of the first recorded gift to Willibrord, as early as 693 (see chap.vii.)—associated himself with his wife Bebelina in granting to him full possession of the church of St. Peter and St. Paul founded by St. Amandus at Antwerp ; and shortly afterwards this pair supplemented their donation by two estates and what belonged to them.

In 726, or possibly in the following year, Willibrord drew up what has been called his " will." A will in the strict sense it is not, for, in the first place, it makes no exhaustive disposal of his property, and, secondly—what is even more important,—the provisions of the document were to come into operation at once, " from the present day." In reality it is a deed of conveyance according to which the various possessions that had come to him personally, and especially what had been given him by Pippin and Plectrude, by Karl and the Frankish freemen, were ceded to his monastery at Echternach ; in that place also, the document incidentally says, his body is one day to be laid to rest. He was now approaching the Psalmist's term of three score years and ten : fitting time, as he doubtless thought, to see that " his own monastery " should receive such benefits as he could confer upon it.

From the year 728 we have two brief notes from his own hand. In that year a charter was drafted by

Widegern, Bishop of Strassburg, sanctioning the foundation of a monastery at Morbach in the Vosges by a certain Count Eberhard, and assigning various gifts to it; among the signatures appended to this document is that of Willibrord in the formula "In the name of God, I, Willibrord, have signed this" (Ego in Dei nomen [*sic*] Willibrordus subscripsi). This might be taken to imply that Willibrord was then in Alsace, but in default of other information on the point, we cannot be certain. The other personal note is that already referred to as having been inserted in the Echternach Calendar. On the left-hand margin of the page for November, Willibrord—that the note was penned by him is virtually certain,—after recalling the two pivotal events of his life, viz., his crossing to Francia in 690, and his consecration at Rome in 695, speaks of himself as passing auspiciously through the year 728 (see Appendix B.)

To Willibrord, however, it was appointed that by reason of strength he should attain to, and even survive, the age of four-score years. Of the decade or more apportioned to him after he made the entry just mentioned we know but little. The charters fail us here, and the biographies of other men make note of no definite point of contact with him at this time. All the more grateful must we feel to Bede and Boniface for the brief yet revealing glimpses which they give of these declining years. Bede is believed to have completed his *Ecclesiastical History* in 731, and, as it would appear, in that very year wrote as follows: "Wilbrord himself, surnamed Clement, is still alive, venerable for his great age, having been a bishop for thirty-six years, and now, after the manifold conflicts

of his spiritual warfare, he yearns with all his heart for the recompense of the reward in heaven." The reference of Boniface to Willibrord's last years comes from a much later date. In the last year of his own life the Apostle of Germany, having become involved with the Bishop of Cologne in a dispute regarding the See of Utrecht, wrote to the Pope asking for an authoritative judgment on the matter, and in the course of his letter speaks of Willibrord as having continued to preach in Utrecht down to his infirm old age, and as having appointed an assistant bishop to discharge the duties of his office. It may well be that these words of Boniface actually refer to a time anterior to the date indicated by Bede's closing reference to Willibrord, which may fairly be read as implying that the aged missionary had already retired from active work, and was now enjoying an honourable repose.

The rest is silence—to be broken only by words telling of his death and burial. During these closing years of Willibrord's long life, Western Europe rang with the clash of arms. Thus in 732, between Poitiers and Tours, Charles stemmed the tide of Saracen advance by a victory that won him the cognomen *Martel*, "the Hammer," and saved Christian civilisation in the West from being throttled in its adolescence. Again, in 733 and 734, the Hammer struck effectively at the pagan Frisians. What impression these things and the like made upon Willibrord we do not know; even the last-noted campaign could not now be of such moment to him as it was to be to his successors in that field. Perhaps we should take Bede's final words about him very literally: his heart's desire was now turned towards

the farther shore ; he had done with secular things, and his active participation in Church concerns was at an end. For him the wheel had come full circle : the man who, as a young English monk, had spent twelve years in Ireland " for love of the eternal country," had now, after decades of strenuous toil, and as he drew near to the final bourne, returned to the devout contemplations and longings of his youth.

When we come to speak of his death we find ourselves confronted by a conflict of evidence. Upon consideration of all the available data, and partly by calculation, partly by a sifting of various sources, we seem warranted in saying that he died at Echternach on the 7th of November, 739, in the 82nd year of his age (see Appendix C.) It is certain that his remains were laid to rest within the precincts of his own monastery at Echternach.

CHAPTER XVII

Achievement, methods, and character

For Willibrord we cannot make the claim that he was the pioneer of Christianity among the Frisians, inasmuch as other men, alike of Frankish and of English origin, had laboured in that field before him. He was, however, the first to lay a permanent foundation of the Christian religion there, and the first to devote the mature years of his life to building upon it. It is true that the results hardly seem commensurate with the long and strenuous effort he made, for we cannot accept Boniface's testimony that Willibrord converted the Frisians to Christianity " in greater part." The

qualifying phrase is still much too broad, and the writer's own tragic fate at Dokkum fifteen years after Willibrord's death makes a tragic commentary on the statement ; for decades afterwards, indeed, the whole north-east of Frisia still remained pagan soil. In point of fact, there is no evidence of Willibrord's having systematically evangelised any territory to the north of Lake Flevo. Moreover, Pippin's aim in supporting Willibrord, viz., the formation of Frisia into a province of the Church, was realised only for a time. After Willibrord's death the see of Utrecht remained vacant for some years, but at length, some time after 741, Boniface, at the behest of Duke Carloman, installed in it a diocesan bishop whose name has not come down to us, and appointed Gregory as abbot of the monastery, while the see itself was ultimately ceded to the archdiocese of Cologne.

We ought to bear in mind, however, the special difficulties amid which Willibrord had perforce to work. The Frisians were not merely heathens, but, associating as they did the Christian religion with Frankish designs of conquest, they had a double measure of antipathy to it ; and more than once, when striking at the Franks, they laid waste whatever the Church had won within their territory, whether at the time alienated from them or still recognised as theirs, thus overthrowing in a few days what had taken years to build. In the circumstances, it was wonderful that Willibrord achieved as much as he did. When he died, Christianity was firmly established in Southern Frisia, and a strong base had been laid for further missionary enterprise among the heathen Teutons to the north and east. An avenue had also been cleared for the

work of Boniface, as of Gregory, Liudger, and many others.

The methods adopted by Willibrord in his evangelising work are not definitely brought before us in any of the sources ; here and there, however, we find a detail of some interest. He usually travelled with a number of companions. As a means of locomotion upon his journeys he made use of horses, though in a region so thickly threaded with waters, he must often have resorted to boats. We hear of a portable altar that he carried with him, and also of a golden cross that he may have made some use of in his itinerant work.

Speaking of means and accessories, we may note in passing that, as regards the important instrument of language, Willibrord would have little difficulty. His native Anglian bore so close a kinship to the vernaculars of the Continental sea-board facing England that it could have required but slight modification to become a quite adequate medium of communication with the various peoples settled there.

Coming to considerations of a more general kind, we may set forth Willibrord's methods by comparing them with those of the modern missionary. The missionary now-a-days endeavours usually to establish a central institution, which becomes a township with a church, a school, a medical dispensary, and occasionally an emporium or a factory, as also a special women's department ; and this again is linked to a number of out-stations which are regularly visited and supplied with the means of Grace. Now, some of the

important features of this diversified activity appear also in Willibrord's system. He had his central institution at Utrecht, and, working from there outwards, he founded other settlements in the surrounding district, supplying them with preachers and priests, and building churches for them. In Utrecht he had also a school—not, indeed, for education in general, but for the training of those who were to dispense the Word and the Sacraments in his churches. His monastery at Utrecht, like others which he developed or instituted, was in part a retreat, but was also a college of missionaries ever ready for itinerant service. If in all this his primary aim was to win men and women for Christ, he strove next to consolidate and organise what had been won.

In the nature of things we cannot expect that the medical side of modern missions would have any real counterpart in Willibrord's work ; in that age the great panaceas were consecrated water and saints' relics, and of these Willibrord made abundant use, ever recognising, however, that the healing virtues associated with them were from God. We hear nothing of his being concerned in women's work ; his oratory and cell at Susteren eventually developed into a nunnery, but this took place after his day.

In the Christian economy of that age, as for centuries afterwards, the monastery played a rôle of vast importance, and Willibrord devoted no small share of his energies to the founding, organisation, and supervision of monastic establishments. To-day, outside the Roman Communion, the monastery has no exact counterpart among Christian institutions. Yet it would betray a shallow reading of religious history

not to see that the monastery was a great power for good in its time ; and assuredly, if its existence was ever justified at all, it must have been among semi-barbarous nations like the Frisians or the Saxons, who lived mostly in a state of warfare, and saw their ideal man in the warrior ; for in the cloister learning and other forms of human culture found a quiet recess in which they could grow, and, what is of even greater moment, the institution presented to the warlike or worldly mind the example of a society happy in the pursuits of peace and the contemplation of unworldly things. In the hands of Willibrord, moreover, the monastery was, as we have said, not a mere refuge from a harsh and violent world ; it was a nursery of evangelists, and thus a centre of spiritual light and religious zeal. And in connection with this aspect of the institution, it is but just to refer to the great work being done to-day by the Cowley Fathers in India, South Africa, and elsewhere, by the Oxford Mission to Calcutta, and by various Anglican Sisterhoods—all of which are organised on monastic lines.

Within the last two generations or so, missionaries —as indeed ministers of the Word generally—have tended to give much less prominence to the hope of reward and the fear of punishment than was common in former times. As regards this feature Willibrord was the son of his age, and made full use of the appeal to the solemn sanctions of the Hereafter. Still, it is worth noting that while some of the religious teachers of his age regarded the Sacrament of Baptism and the profession of Faith as mechanical expedients for securing salvation, Willibrord himself emphasised, more than most, the ethical and spiritual implications

of these great institutions. Thus in the longest of his reported speeches—that, namely, addressed to King Radbod in Heligoland—he asserts (if we may trust Alcuin) that one who would enjoy eternal felicity must not only believe and be baptised, but must in his baptism cast away all wickedness and unrighteousness, and in his faith live henceforth as *a new man* in temperance, righteousness, and holiness. We can well believe, therefore,—as all our sources bear out—that Willibrord never countenanced compulsory baptism. Force was never a favourite resource of his, though we may remember, and some might criticise, his demolishing the pagan idol in Walcheren, and his violating the pagan sanctities of Heligoland. At an early stage in his missionary career, it is true, he placed himself under the protection of Pippin, but this can give no umbrage to those who remember that St. Paul himself sometimes had recourse to asserting his Roman citizenship, and did all his work in countries subject to Roman authority ; while we know that the modern missionary usually enjoys a protection of the same kind, not always visible, perhaps, but none the less real, or the less distinctly felt.

In chapter 24 Alcuin gives us a miniature of Willibrord's personality and character. With a few rapid strokes he sets him before us in his mental and physical characteristics—the various lustrous facets of an all-round excellence. He then enumerates the missionary's spiritual qualities : his forbearance, as seen in certain testing emergencies occurring in the course of his travels ; his purity and devoutness of

spirit, as finding expression in the assiduity with which he applied himself to the pious exercises of the cloister, and as ratified by signs from above; his love, as demonstrated by the long and tireless labours he undertook for Christ's sake. It is the eulogy of a whole-hearted admirer, who will see no spots in the sun, far less look for them.

The more sober-minded Bede indulges in no such glowing laudation, yet writes with warm appreciation of Willibrord's long and arduous services, and, in all he says, manifests his conviction that behind these lay a real and distinct superiority of character as well as a devout and consecrated spirit.

One who stood nearer to Willibrord than either Bede or Alcuin, viz., Boniface, a fellow-labourer and intimate friend, who was thus able to speak from direct personal observation, goes to the heart of the matter in a few brief words about Willibrord's character and work. He describes him as a priest of marvellous abstinence and sanctity, and as having preached to the Frisians for fifty years, and converted them in great part to the Christian Faith.

In these several delineations the halo of the saint throws something of a haze over the features of the man. Yet in their essential elements the descriptions are substantiated in great degree by the actual facts known to us. The zeal and perseverance with which Willibrord laboured in a hard field for nearly fifty years surely tell of a genuinely dedicated soul, and of a man whose work was never stained by selfish or personal considerations. That Ecgberct, the devoted bishop and saint of Rathmelsigi, selected him to lead and direct the mission to Frisia, and that the missionary

stood so high with Pippin and Charles Martel, and even earned the respect of Radbod, testifies to a strong personality. The countless gifts bestowed upon him—many of them entailing great responsibilities—show how he was trusted as a just steward of God's heritage, and as having a notable talent for management and organisation. Then through the quartz of his more virile qualities run fine veins of gentleness, modesty, and affection. In the case of Willibrord, indeed, it is less necessary than in the case of many others to make allowance for things due to the defects of the age, and out of harmony with the spirit of the New Testament; and our total impression of him is that of a faithful apostle and sincere disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE LIFE OF WILLIBRORD

Translated from the Vita Willibrordi *

OF

ALCUIN

*The " Prologue," addressed to Archbishop Beornrade, and the " Homily concerning Willibrord " at the end of the Vita, have not been considered of sufficient interest or value to justify their being given in the translation.

THE LIFE OF WILLIBRORD

Translated from the Vita Willibrordi.

THERE was in the Island of Britain, in the province of Northumbria, a certain householder of Saxon* descent, Wilgils† by name, who with his wife and all his house lived a devout life in Christ, as was afterwards attested by miraculous events. For, laying aside his ordinary raiment, he gave himself to the monastic life, and shortly thereafter, as his zeal for the spiritual life increased, he gave himself with a yet more intense fervour to a life of solitary austerity in the headlands girt by the sea and the River Humber. Here in a little oratory dedicated to the name of St. Andrew the apostle of Christ, he served God for a long while in fastings, prayers, and vigils, so that he came to be celebrated by miracles also, and his name became widely renowned. And when the people flocked to him in great numbers he continued to exhort them by the most gracious counsels of God's word ; moreover, he came to be so highly honoured by the king and the great people of that nation that they made over to him in perpetual gift certain small properties in land lying near the headlands, in order that he might build there a church for God. Here the pious father gathered together a relatively

*As Wilgils, the father of Willibrord, belonged to the Anglian, not the Saxon, district of Britain, we take the term Saxon here as meaning broadly Teutonic or Germanic, *i.e.*, not-British, not-Scottish. In like manner, though conversely, Boniface is said in Liudger's " Life of Gregory of Utrecht " (ch. 1) to have come " of the people of the Angles," although in reality he was of *Saxon* descent.

†Other forms of this name are Wilgis, Wilsig, Wilgisl.

small but worthy company of those who served God, and here too, crowned by God after the manifold conflicts of his holy labours, he reposes in the body; and his successors, following the example of his holiness, are in possession of this church to the present day. Of these, I, the least in merit and latest in the sequence, have taken upon myself by lawful succession the superintendence of that little cell—I who have written this account of the most holy father and supreme teacher Willibrord, at your request, most blessed bishop Beornrade, who by the grace vouchsafed to you by God have become the altogether worthy heir of that great father in the dignity of the high-priesthood, in the line of family descent,* and in the care of the holy places which, as we know, he built for the glory of God.

(2). Now, in order to relate more fully the facts of Willibrord's birth, and to recount the prognostics of his divine election while still in his mother's womb, I shall return to where I began. For, just as the most holy forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed John the Baptist, sanctified from his mother's womb, and preceding Christ as the morning star precedes the sun, was born, as the gospel narrative tells, of devout parents in order to bring salvation to many, so the holy Willibrord, begotten likewise for the salvation of many, is known to have been born of devout parents. For Wilgils, the venerable man of whom I have spoken above, entered the state of marriage by divine

*These words imply that Beornrade, abbot of Echternach, belonged to the same family as Willibrord. A similar relationship is often ascribed to Alcuin, but that writer's own words probably point to an heirship of office rather than one of family descent.

fore-ordination, wholly in order that there might issue from it such a son for the advantage of many peoples. Accordingly his wife—the mother of the holy father Willibrord—in the profound quiet of the night, beheld a heavenly vision in her sleep. It seemed to her as if she saw in the sky the new moon, which increased till it appeared as the full moon. While she was gazing intently upon this, a stone* fell with swift flight into her mouth, and when she had swallowed it, her bosom was suffused with radiance. Having awaked in great fear, she related her dream to a devout priest, who asked her whether in the night in which the vision came to her she had known her husband in the customary way ; and, when he had received her confession of the fact, he rejoined as follows : " The moon which you saw as having grown from small to great is the son whom in that night you conceived. He dispels the murky errors of darkness with the light of truth, and wherever he goes, attended by the splendour of heavenly radiance, he will manifest the full orb of his perfection, and by the glowing brightness of his fame, and the beauty of his manner of life, will draw the eyes of multitudes to himself." This reading of the dream was borne out by the actual course of events.

(3). It came to pass, when the time was come about, that the woman bare a son,† and when he had been regenerated at the sacred font of baptism, his father gave him the name Willibrord, and, as soon as the infant was weaned, entrusted him to the brothers of the church at Hrypen (Ripon), in order that he might be

*The best texts imply that it was the moon itself which thus fell ; " stone " represents *lapis*, a conjecture for *lapsa* or *lapsu*.

†*cf.* I Sam. 1/20.

instructed in religious pursuits and sacred learning, and that thereby his tender years should be fortified by sound discipline in a sphere where he should see nothing but what was virtuous and hear nothing but what was holy. From his earliest childhood the divine grace enabled him to grow in intelligence and to become strong in moral character, as far as was possible at such an age ; so that it seemed as if in our time there had been born another Samuel—of whom it was said " the boy Samuel grew on, and increased in favour both with God and with men."* Hence, in the said monastery, the youth who was to prove a blessing to many received the tonsure of the clerical office, and by his dutiful profession became a monk ; and, nurtured in that most sacred institution along with other youths, he was inferior to none in ardour, in the duty of humility, or in avidity for learning ; in fact, the finely-gifted boy made progress daily in such manner as to triumph over the tender years of boyhood by earnestness of character, and, while still small and delicate in body, attained to the wisdom of ripe age.

(4). When the youth, thus supremely blessed in sacred learning as in self-command and integrity of character, reached the twentieth year of his age, he was fired with zeal for a more rigorous life and stirred by a desire for pilgrimage. Then, having heard that there was a rich development of learning in Ireland, and being stimulated by what was told of the mode of life adopted by certain holy men there, especially the blessed father and bishop, Ecgberct, to whom was given the title of " Saint," and Wictberct,† the venerable

*cf. I Sam. 2/26.

†The names Ecgberct and Wictberct appear in a great variety of spellings.

servant and priest of God, both of whom, out of love for the heavenly country, had left home, fatherland, and kindred, and had gone to Ireland, and there, having renounced the world, though filled with God, daily feasted upon the choicest fruits of heavenly contemplation in the monastic life. The divinely blessed youth, desirous of emulating the godly life of these men, and having obtained the consent of his abbot and the brethren, then passed over to Ireland by a speedy voyage, and joined the intimate circle of the said Fathers in order that, in close contact with them, he might, like the wise bee, regale himself upon the honey-yielding flowers of godliness, and mould the sweet honey-combs of virtue in the hive of his own heart. Here, among these eminent masters alike in the devout life and in sacred learning, he who was one day to preach to many peoples continued his studies for twelve years, until at length he attained to mature manhood and the full age of Christ.

(5). In the thirty-third year of his age, accordingly, the flame of faith mounting ever higher in the breast of this remarkable man, he came to think it too slight a thing to take pains in the holy life for himself alone, if he did not benefit others as well by the truth of the Word. He heard that in the northern regions of the world the harvest was great, but the labourers few. In order, however, that the dream which his mother testified to have dreamt concerning him should by divine dispensation come true, he, being fully aware of his own purpose, though as yet ignorant of the divine pre-ordination, proposed to take ship for those parts, and, if God so willed it, to bring the clear light of the gospel message to bear upon peoples lying torpid in

their long-standing unbelief.* He accordingly embarked, taking with him eleven† brothers endowed with a fervour of faith like his own. Of these some afterwards gained the martyr's crown because of their constancy in preaching the gospel ; while others, who came to be consecrated as bishops, now, after their toils in the holy work of preaching, have gone to their rest in peace.

So, the man of God with his companions, as we have said, sailed on until after a prosperous voyage they moored at the mouths of the Rhine,‡ and, having refreshed themselves at the wished-for landing-place, soon arrived at the fort of Trajectum (Utrecht), which lies on the bank of that river, and where some time afterwards, by the divine favour and the increase of the word of faith, the holy Willibrord had the seat of his bishopric. But as the Frisian people, amidst whom that fortress was situated, and Radbod their king, were as yet defiled by pagan practices, the man of God thought it well to set out for Francia and approach the Duke of that country, namely, Pippin, who was a man of high spirit, renowned for his victories and upright in his conduct. The Duke received him with all honour ; but as he was unwilling to deprive himself and his people of so great a teacher, he assigned to him suitable localities within the bounds of his own realm, where he could uproot the thorns of idolatry and scatter

*Alcuin makes no reference to the fact that Willibrord was in this matter strongly influenced by Ecgberct, and had his full practical support ; *cf.* Bede, v. 10.

†Some good MSS. say " twelve " ; so also Thiofrid.

‡Thiofrid says that their first landing-place was the maritime town of Gravalinga, *i.e.*, Gravelines, dép. Nord, France, probably reporting a local tradition founded on the fact that Gravelines belonged to a diocese that was dedicated to St. Willibrord.

more abundantly the pure seed of God's Word upon the cleansed fallows, and so carry out the prophetic precept. " Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns."*

(6). When the man of God had most zealously visited the several localities and carried out the desired task of evangelisation, and when the seed of life, watered by the dews of heavenly grace, had by his preaching sprouted richly and widely in the soil of many hearts, the aforesaid Duke of the Franks, rejoicing in Willibrord's holy zeal and in the magnificent expansion of God's Word, thought in his wise counsel, with a view to still greater progress, of sending him to Rome in order that he might be consecrated to the dignity of the chief-priesthood by the apostolic lord Sergius,† the most holy man of that time, so that, after receiving the apostolic blessing and commission, and fortified with greater confidence as the Pope's emissary, he should come back to the work of the Gospel, according to the word of the apostle—" How shall they preach except they be sent ? "‡ But when the Duke sought to persuade the man of God to do this, the latter at first refused, saying that he was not worthy of such a prerogative ; and, recounting the injunctions of apostolic authority, asserted that he fell far short as regards the series of virtues which the great preacher to the Gentiles, instructing his son Timothy, spoke of as essential in a bishop.§ In reply the Duke solemnly urged what the man of God had humbly declined. At length, won by a unanimous appeal, and, what is more, constrained by the divine will, Willibrord acquiesced,

*Jer. 4/3. †Sergius I., 687-701. ‡Rom. 10/15.
§I. Tim. 3, 1—7.

willing rather to submit to the counsel of many than obstinately to insist upon his own will. And, accordingly, as one of a distinguished embassy, and bearing gifts appropriate to the apostolic dignity, he was sent to Rome.*

(7). On the fourth day before Willibrord arrived, however, the blessed apostolic father was warned in a dream by an angelic announcement that he was to be received with the highest honour ; that, as one chosen by God to bring light to many souls, he was coming for the purpose of receiving the dignity of the episcopate ; and that nothing he asked for was to be denied him. The apostolic father, assured by this admonition, received him with great joy and with the highest honours ; and, as he discerned in him fervour of faith, devotion of personal religion, and fulness of wisdom, he chose an appropriate day when the people would be assembling together, and, calling the reverend priests to participate in the ceremony, he consecrated him publicly in apostolic fashion and with great solemnity, as archbishop, in the Church of the Blessed Peter,† prince of the apostles, gave him the name of Clement, invested him with his sacerdotal robes, and confirmed him with the sacred pallium of his office, as Aaron with the Ephod, and with splendid raiment. Moreover, he gave him with ready goodwill whatsoever he desired or asked in the way of saints' relics or church appliances, and, having fortified him with his

*Alcuin writes as if Willibrord visited Rome only once. From Bede (v. 11) we learn that the missionary, shortly after his coming to Frisia, went to Rome of his own accord in order to obtain the papal blessing upon and sanction for the proposed work in Frisia.

†Bede (v. 11) says that the consecration took place in the church of St. Cecilia.

benediction and enriched him with gifts, sent him back with salutary counsels to the work of the Gospel.

(8). Then the devoted preacher of God's Word, thus endowed with the blessing of the apostolic see, returned with enhanced confidence to the aforesaid Duke of the Franks. The Duke, having received him with every manifestation of honour, sent him forth by the mandate of his authority to the work of the Gospel, more especially in the northern regions of his dominion, where, owing to the paucity of teachers or the obduracy of the inhabitants, the light of the faith shone less brightly. And in these districts the man of God, the more clearly he saw the need of arresting the long privations of ignorance, was the more zealous in scattering the seed of the Word. And as for the harvests which, with the help of the divine Grace, he secured in these places, witnesses are found to this day in the people whom, throughout cities, villages, and forts, he brought by his holy admonitions to a knowledge of the truth and the worship of the one omnipotent God. Other evidences are the churches which he built in the several places and the societies of God's servants which he gathered together in various localities.

(9). This man of God, moreover, sought to direct the streams of heavenly teaching beyond the confines of the Frankish kingdom. He did not fear to wait upon Radbod, then King of the Frisians, and, like his subjects, a pagan ; and wherever he went he proclaimed God's Word with full confidence. But while the Frisian king received the man of God kindly and in humility, no application of the Word of Life could soften that heart of stone, and when the man of God

saw that he could win no fruit there,* he turned his missionary course to the savage tribes of the Danes. At that time, it is recorded, the Danish ruler was Ongendus, a man fiercer than any wild beast and harder than stone, who, nevertheless, by divine injunction, treated the herald of the truth with all honour. Then the latter, finding the people hardened in their own practices, abandoned to idolatry, and destitute of any hope of a better life, took thirty boys from amongst them, and made haste to return with these to the chosen people of the Frankish kingdom. While on the way he instructed the youths and cleansed them in the fountain of life, so that he should suffer no loss in their regard either from the dangers of the long voyage or from the wiles of the ferocious inhabitants of that region, desiring thus to obviate the craft of the old enemy, and to fortify the redeemed souls by the sacraments of the Lord.

(10). Now while the devout preacher of the Word was pursuing his journey he came, at the boundary between the Frisians and the Danes, to a certain island which the people of the country call Fositesland,† after a god Fosite, worshipped by them ; for sanctuaries of that deity stood there. This place was regarded by the pagans with such veneration that none of the natives would venture to meddle with any of the cattle that fed there, or with anything else ; or dare to draw water from a spring that bubbled forth there except in silence. The man of God, driven thither by a

*Here certain late MSS. insert a passage from the life of Wulfram, which says that at this time Wulfram was a fellow-worker with Willibrord.

†Heligoland ; for the whole incident see chap. x.

storm, waited for some days until the passing of the tempestuous weather should afford a fit opportunity for sailing. But, little impressed by the foolish sanctity ascribed to the place, or by the fierce spirit of the king, who devoted the violators of the sacred objects to the most cruel death, Willibrord, invoking the Holy Trinity, baptised three persons in the fountain, and gave orders that some of the cattle feeding there should be slaughtered as food for his company. When the pagans saw this they expected that the strangers would become mad or be overwhelmed by a swift death. Noticing, however, that they suffered no harm, the pagans, terror-stricken and astounded, reported to King Radbod what they had witnessed.

(11). The king, stirred thereby to excessive fury, thought to avenge the injury done to his deities upon the priest of the living God, and for three days cast lots three times daily, according to his custom ; but as the true God protected His own, the lot of the condemned could never fall upon the servant of God, or any of his people, except that one only of the company was indicated by the lot, and so won the martyr's crown. The holy man was then summoned before the king, and severely upbraided by him as to why he had violated the king's sacred things and done dishonour to his god. With mind unshaken the herald of the Truth replied thus : " What you worship, O King, is not a god, but the devil, who holds you ensnared in the vilest error in order that he may deliver your soul to eternal fire. For there is no god but the One, who created heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them ; and those who worship Him in true faith will

have eternal life. As His servant I bear witness before you this day, so that you may now at last turn to wisdom from the vanity of ancient error to which your fathers adhered ; that, believing in the one omnipotent God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and being baptised in the font of life, you may wash away all your sins ; and that, casting away all wickedness and unrighteousness, you may henceforth live as a new man in all temperance, righteousness, and holiness. If you do this you will enjoy eternal glory with God and His saints ; if, however, you spurn me who now set before you the way of life, then be fully assured that, with the devil whom you obey, you will suffer everlasting punishment and the flames of hell." At this the king marvelled, and replied : " I see that you do not fear my threats, and that your words are as your deeds " ; and although he would not believe the preacher of the Truth, he nevertheless sent him back in all honour to Pippin, duke of the Franks.

(12). The latter was delighted at his return, and begged that he should persevere in his appointed work in the Word of God, and that, rooting up the thorns of idolatry, he should zealously sow God's Word in one place after another. This the devoted preacher strove to perform with no lack of energy, traversing all quarters of the country, and, in the cities, villages, and forts, where he had previously preached the Gospel, exhorting all the people to adhere firmly to the true faith with good purpose of heart. And as the number of the faithful increased day by day, and a considerable multitude of believers came to a knowledge of God's Word, many, moved by zeal for the faith, began to cede their hereditary properties to the man of God.

These he accepted, and in no long time had churches built there, appointed priests to each of them, as also helpers in the Word of God, so that the new people of God should have places in which they could assemble upon feast-days and listen to wholesome exhortations, and that from these servants of God they might receive the gifts of holy baptism and learn the precepts of the Christian religion. Thus the man of God, favoured by divine grace, made increasing advance day by day.

(13). It came about, however, that Pippin, Duke of the Franks, died, and his son Charles became head of his realm. Charles brought many nations under the sceptre of the Franks, and amongst these, after defeating Radbod, he likewise added Frisia to his father's dominions in a glorious triumph. At this juncture St. Willibrord was appointed as a preacher amongst that people, and a seat for his bishopric was assigned to him in the fortress of Trajectum.* Having thus obtained a larger opportunity for evangelisation, he sought by means of sacred baptism to purify the people recently won by the sword.† Amongst them he did not allow anything of the ancient error to lurk in the darkness of ignorance, but bathed all without delay in the light of the Gospel, so that among that people there was presently a fulfilment of the prophetic utterance : " In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.‡"

*Willibrord's appointment to Utrecht as archbishop is here post-dated by twenty years or more ; and much of what is said by Alcuin to have taken place under Charles Martel really took place under his father, Pippin.

†An epitome of a Brussels codex, No. 3160, of date 1480, interpolates here the story of Radbod's baptism by Wulfram from the life of the latter (Poncelet).

‡Hos. 1/10.

(14). Many miracles also did the divine power effect by means of its agent. While the ministry of evangelical preaching is to be preferred to all working of miracles and manifestation of signs, yet since we are told of such things having been performed, we judge it right, for the glory of God, who vouchsafed them, not to be silent, but rather to insert them in our narrative, so that what we know to have been done in former times may not be lost to future ages.

Thus when the venerable man, according to his wonted practice, was upon a journey of evangelisation, he came to a village called Walichrum (Island of Walcheren*), where an idol of the ancient superstition still remained. When the man of God in burning zeal was shattering it before the eyes of its custodian, the latter, kindled to extreme fury, with a view to avenging the insult to what was to him as a god, in the passion of his senseless heart struck the priest of Christ upon the head with a sword ; but, as God was guarding His servant, he took no harm from the murderous blow. His companions, seeing this, rushed forward to punish the wicked audacity of the godless man by death. The culprit, however, was delivered from their hands by the man of God in benevolence of spirit, and allowed to go ; nevertheless the same day a demoniacal spirit came upon him, and the third day he miserably ended his wretched life. And so, because the man of God, according to the Lord's precept, would not himself

*Certain codices of the 13th century have corrected *villam* to *insulam* (island). The monastery of Echternach claimed certain properties in the island. Thiofrid says that Willibrord's blood was still to be seen on the base of the altar in the church called Westcapella. The town of Westkapelle lies to the west of the island.

avenge the injuries done to him, all the more swiftly was he vindicated by the Lord Himself, even as He has said regarding the wrongs which the impious inflict upon His saints : Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.*

(15). On another occasion, when the blessed man was on his way to a cell belonging to him—named Suestra† (Susteren) from the stream that flows past it—he proceeded, in order to shorten the way, by a narrow path leading through the corn-fields of a certain rich man. When the keeper of the fields saw this, he was furious, and began to revile the man of God. But when those who were with the missionary wanted to punish the person thus insulting him, the servant of God in a meek spirit restrained them, not wishing that any one should lose his life on account of one who yearned for the salvation of all ; and when he found it impossible by any means to soothe the mind of the foolish man, he, giving place to wrath, returned by the way he had come. Next day, however, the wretched man who had not feared to heap insults upon the servant of God died suddenly in the same place before the eyes of many.

(16). While the divinely inspired man, in his urgent desire to preach the Gospel, was travelling through the coast regions, where the people were suffering from the lack of fresh water, he, seeing that his companions could hardly bear the pangs of thirst, called one of them, and bade him open a small trench inside his tent. Here, upon his knees, he secretly prayed to the God who for His people brought water from the rock in the deserts, that with like compassion He should bring

*Rom. 12/19. †See chap. xi.

forth water for His servants from the sandy earth. He was heard at once, and suddenly a spring of the sweetest savour filled the trench. When his followers saw this they gave thanks to Almighty God, who thus glorified His holy one, and condescended to hear him; and they drank till they were satisfied, and took with them as much as they thought sufficient for the journey before them.*

(17). Again, when the holy priest of God was pursuing his way in a certain place, he saw twelve poor mendicants all begging help from those who passed by. Being of a most gracious nature, he looked at them in a kindly spirit, and bade one of his people take his own flask† and prepare a drink for Christ's poor. All the twelve drank of this as much as they wanted, and, what was very remarkable, as the company went on their way they found that the flask from which so many had drunk was as full as before of the most excellent wine. When they discovered this, they all blessed our Lord, saying: "Verily, to us has been fulfilled what Christ our God said in the Gospels, Give, and it shall be given unto you."‡

(18). Once the saintly man came on a visit to his monastery,§ and, after prayers to God, fraternal greetings, and peaceable admonitions, the devout pastor went round the several dwelling-places of the

*Johannes de Beka connects this miracle with a spring at Heyligelo, now Heilo, in the province of North Holland, where it was known as St. Willibrord's Well. It is stated in a late charter (12th century) that the church of Heyligelo had been given to Willibrord, and this tradition may have served to link the miracle with the place.

†Alcuin's word here is *flasco* (*-onis*), a Latinized form of the Teutonic word preserved in German *Flasche*, English *flask*.

‡Luke 6/38.

§Echternach; see chap. ix.

brothers for the purpose of ascertaining whether anything in them might be bettered. Entering the cellar likewise, he found there only a small supply of wine in one cask, into which, in token of his blessing, he inserted his staff with a prayer, and then went out. The same night, however, the wine in the barrel began to rise, and to run over the edge of the vessel. When the steward noticed this, he was astounded at the unlooked-for abundance, and did not dare to keep secret what he knew to have been wrought by God's mercy through the benediction of His servant. Next morning he ran to the saintly father, and, throwing himself at his feet, reported what he had seen. Willibrord gave thanks, as was his wont, and, bearing in mind the Lord's command enjoining the disciples not to tell anyone of the glory of the Transfiguration before the day of His Resurrection, he commanded the steward not to speak to anyone of the miracle witnessed by him until the day of his (Willibrord's) death.

(19). A further miracle of the same kind was wrought by Christ our God through Willibrord's benediction. On one occasion, the servant of God having arrived with his companions at the house of a friend, he wished to relieve for a short time the labour of the long journey by a refreshment in his friend's home, but found that the head of the house had no wine. He gave orders that the four moderately-sized bottles, which were all that his companions carried for comfort upon their journey, should be brought to him, and blessed them in the name of Him who at the marriage feast changed water into wine. And in marvellous wise, after this gracious benediction, about forty men drank from these small bottles till they were

satisfied, and with great thanksgiving and joyful hearts said one to another : " The Lord Jesus has in truth fulfilled what He promised in the Gospel, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do."*

(20). Once when this holy preacher, according to his custom, was proceeding in haste towards Frisia in order to preach the Gospel, he wished, because of the fatigue of the journey, to let the tired horses refresh themselves for a while in the meadows of a certain rich man.† The latter, seeing the horses feeding upon his ground, began in arrogant mood to beat them and drive them from his pastures. In the gentlest language the man of God addressed him thus : " Stop doing us injury, brother ; it is with no intent to do you harm, but because of our own needs, that we desire to rest for a short while in these meadows. Urgency is laid upon us to do the work of God, the rewards of which you too might share if, as far as in you lies, you would help us in a friendly spirit, mindful of the sweet promise of our Lord Jesus Christ : He that receiveth you, receiveth me ; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.‡ As a friend, rather, and in a peaceable spirit, drink something with us by way of refreshment, and so when we proceed upon our journey, go to your own home with the blessing of God." The man, however, persisted in his ill-will, and would not assent to the pacific words of the man of God, but rather repeated his abuse and kept hurling his taunts : " You ask me to drink with you, and make peace ; be assured that I set no store whatever upon

*John 14/12.
†This was a recognised concession to travellers.
‡Matt. 10/40.

drinking with you." The man of God took the word out of his mouth and said: "If you will not drink with me, then do not drink at all." Thereupon, as soon as his companions had made ready, he went upon his way. The obstinate man too went hurriedly home, but was at once seized with a burning thirst, and sought to cool his tormented stomach with wine; but the mouth that had cast reproaches upon the man of God was unable to take in a single draught, and the man who would not of his own accord have peace with the servant of God had now of necessity to bear the penalty within himself. Doctors were called in to relieve his thirst, and restore to the sufferer the power of drinking. His inward parts were gasping, but no one could get a drop of wine to reach his parched throat. At length, though late, touched with penitence, he came to his senses, and, recognising that the man whom he had reviled was the saintly Willibrord, began to wish with vehement longing for his return. In the year following Willibrord came back by the same way, and the sick man, having heard of his coming, hurried to meet him, and, confessing his sin and telling him of the retribution he had endured, besought him by the love of Christ to deliver him therefrom. The man of God, moved with pity, pardoned him, and with a benediction gave him to drink of his own cup. Thereupon the man was released, drank, and went to his own house cured.

(21). In the town of Trèves there is a convent for nuns* which was in Bishop Willibrord's day visited by

*In all probability the convent of St. Mary at Horrea, now Oeren, the head of which was Irmina or Ermina, who placed her properties, churches, etc., in Echternach at the disposal of Willibrord.

a severe pestilence. Many of the handmaidens of God died of the affliction ; some were confined to bed by long sickness ; while the rest were in a state of extreme terror, fearing death as if he stood before them. And, as at no great distance from the said town stands the monastery of the holy man, called Aefternaco (Echternach), in which his body reposes to this day, and which his successors are known to hold by the lawful bequest of the father and the benevolence of pious kings, the women of the aforesaid convent, hearing that the holy man was coming thither, sent a deputation beseeching him to come to them without delay. When he learned the desire of Christ's handmaidens, the man of God—taught by the gracious example of St. Peter, prince of the Apostles, who went from Joppa to Lydda at the supplication of the widows of Christ* in order to raise the holy Tabitha to life—went to them without reluctance or delay. Having arrived, he presently celebrated in the convent the mass for the sick, and consecrated water, which he then ordered to be sprinkled upon their dwellings and sent to the invalids as a potion. Through the divine mercy these speedily recovered, nor did any more die in that monastery from the said plague.

(22). The head of a family and his household were afflicted by a terrible visitation of demoniacal sorcery, so that it was quite manifest from the horrors and evil tricks prevailing there that the house was haunted by a wicked spirit. For it would suddenly seize food and

*cf. Acts 9/36ff. The " widows of Christ " were the widows—likely Christians themselves—who received assistance from Tabitha or Dorcas. The message to Peter at Lydda, it should be noted, was actually carried by two men, who were sent upon the errand by the disciples then present in Joppa.

clothing and other household necessaries and throw them into the fire ; once, indeed, it lifted away a little boy resting in the arms of his parents while they were asleep, and threw him into the fire ; the parents, however, aroused by the child's cries, rescued him, though with difficulty, from the flames. And many ill turns did the family endure from that execrable spirit ; nor was any priest able to expel it until the holy man Willibrord, at the father's request, sent them some consecrated water, directing them at the same time to take all the furniture of the house out of doors, and sprinkle it with the water, for he foresaw in the spirit that the house was to be consumed by fire. When this had been done, fire seized upon the empty house, starting from the place where the bed had stood, and burned it to ashes. The family, with the sanctification of consecrated water, erected another house upon the same ground, and in it suffered no more from their former trial, but lived in all tranquillity and quiet, giving thanks to the Lord, who had deigned to deliver them by the hands of His servant.

(23). The same man—well-pleasing to God,—also foretold in the prophetic spirit certain things that were subsequently verified by the course of events. Thus he baptised Pippin (the Short*), son of the most valiant Charles (Martel), Duke of the Franks, and

*This is the Pippin (born 714 or 715) who was the first king of the Carlovingian dynasty. The progress of the vice-regal family of the Pippins to the royal and imperial status is outlined in the following sequence of fathers and sons : (1) Pippin of Héristal, Mayor of the Palace, then Duke of the Franks ; (2) Charles Martel, also Mayor and Duke ; (3) Pippin the Short, who held the same offices, but became King in 752, so displacing the last of the Merowings ; and (4) Charlemagne, King and finally Emperor. Willibrord lived in close relations with the first two of these, and as the text informs us, baptised the third.

father of the present illustrious Charles (*i.e.*, Charlemagne), who now with the highest triumphs and in all dignity most gloriously sways the empire of the Franks. Of that Pippin, father of the last-named, the holy man with prophetic voice uttered the following prediction in presence of his disciples : " Know that this infant will be highly exalted and renowned, and greater than all the dukes of the Franks before him." The truth of this prophecy has been made manifest in our times ; nor is there any need of evidence to make good what is acknowledged by the judgment of the whole kingdom. For all the people know by what triumphs he was honoured as the most illustrious conqueror, how widely he extended the bounds of our empire, how devotedly he promoted the Christian religion in his own realm, and what he performed in defence of the Holy Church of God among foreign nations. All this can be better attested by the eye than set forth in words.

(24). Now this holy man was distinguished by every kind of excellence : he was of becoming stature, of dignified mien, comely of face, cheerful in spirit, wise in counsel, pleasing in speech, sedate in character, and strenuous in all divine work. His forbearance is shown by his actions as recorded above ; how great his zeal was in preaching the Gospel of Christ, and how he was sustained in the work of preaching by the grace of God, we need not set forth in writing, since it is vouched for by the testimony of all. His private way of living, however,—in vigils and prayers, in fastings and singing of psalms—we can infer alike from the sanctity of his life and from his miracles. His love shows itself in the unremitting labours that he bore daily for the name of Christ.

This holy man, however, who made progress in the divine work every day of his life, and who was well-pleasing to God and friendly to all people, was in the time of the elder Charles (Martel), the valiant duke of the Franks, laid to his fathers* ; at a great age, ripe in all completeness of days, and now about to receive from God the manifold fruits of his labour, he left this world behind in order that he might possess heaven, and in eternal glory endlessly behold Christ, in whose love he never ceased to work as long as he lived among us. On the sixth day of November, *i.e.*, the eighth before the Ides,† he passed from this pilgrimage to the eternal country, and was buried in the monastery of Aefternaco, which, as we said before,‡ he had erected to the Glory of God. There to this day, through the workings of divine mercy, miracles and healings are constantly taking place beside the relics of the holy priest of God. And that some of these should be appended to our account of him we regard as making for the glory and praise of our Lord Jesus Christ, who so often deigned to perform them through the pleadings of his servant.

(25). His venerable body was laid in a marble sarcophagus,§ which was at first found too short by about half a foot for the entire body of God's servant ; the brothers were greatly concerned about this, and at a loss what they were to do, debating again and again

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*Acts 13/36.

†So the oldest MSS., but some MSS. of the 12th century have the 7th of November and the 7th before the Ides, and are probably correct. (See Appendix C.)

‡There is no *previous* reference to the founding of the monastery; but *cf.* the following chapters.

§Still shown at Echternach.

where they should find a suitable receptacle for the sacred remains. Strange to say, however, through the divine compassion, the sarcophagus was suddenly discovered to be as much longer than the body of the man of God as previously it had appeared shorter. Therein, then, they laid the body of the man of God, with hymns and psalms, and with all honour, and buried it in the church of the said monastery, which that high priest of God had built and dedicated in honour of the Holy Trinity. The fragrance of a marvellous odour streamed upon the nostrils of all, so that it was clearly recognised that the ministry of angels had been present at the obsequies of the holy man.

(26). The departure of the holy man was revealed to one of his dutiful disciples who was stationed at a distance, and was keeping watch with prayer. He testifies that he saw the soul of his most holy father being carried by angelic hosts to the realms above amid a great splendour of light and with the harmonious praise of singers. Likewise many of the brothers have testified that they have frequently seen a wonderful light above the bed on which he yielded his blessed spirit to the Creator, and perceived there the ravishing fragrance of a sweet odour. From these things, accordingly, one could not but believe that the citizens of heaven frequented the place in which the holy soul passed to the Lord.

(27). Many sick persons, too, through the grace of God and the co-operation of their own faith, were cured by being anointed with the oil that used to give light above the dead body of the saint. Penitents also frequently came to that church, girt with iron rings, as the custom is ; and the rings being broken asunder,

their bonds were presently loosed. This is vouched for by the rings that hang in the church to this day.

(28). A paralysed woman had been tormented with severe pains for seven years, and the daily infirmity within her had attained such severity that she was utterly deprived of the use of her limbs, and dependent upon the help of others ; only in her frail breast [was there movement, as] she gasped forth her breath with difficulty and drew in weary sighs. She was carried by her relatives to the church in which the saint of God reposed, and placed near the casket of his relics ; and there, with many tears, she prayed that God in His clemency might, through the intercession of His holy servant, have pity upon her. She was heard by the Lord God, and soon, delivered from all her infirmities and restored to health, she who was formerly carried by others ran home upon her own feet, joyfully giving thanks to God.

(29). In like manner a young man afflicted with illness was led by the hands of his friends to the body of the blessed prelate ; he had a trembling in every limb and was of himself unable to raise his head, which drooped and turned this way and that, as if it had not been fixed upon his neck ; sometimes too, he became so inert as to appear quite dead. This man, as we said, was placed near the body of the saint by his friends, and by the gift of the divine mercy was, in the sight of all who were present, so quickly made whole that not a trace remained of his former infirmity and long-standing affliction.

(30). Moreover, a certain deacon—by office, not by merit—in the Church of the saint, had not scrupled to take away by a wretched theft the golden cross

which the holy man used to carry on his travels, and other things that had been offered to the church. The brothers were distressed because of this, not knowing the doer of the profane act ; and while confident that through the prayers of God's saint so heinous a crime could not be hidden, they nevertheless strove with brotherly affection to bring the man to repentance, as they did not wish to lose him ; he, however, with an obdurate heart contemned his own salvation, even as, according to Soloman, the wicked contemns when he comes to the depth of his evil deeds.* The wretched man thought that the deed which he knew he had done in secret, and unseen by others, could remain undetected ; but it could not be hidden from the eye of God, to whom all things lie open, and who is often not slow to avenge the injuries done to His servants. For the wretch who had dared to perpetrate the offence was suddenly seized, and died a miserable death ; and at the very end of his life he divulged to some of the brothers the offence of which he was guilty, and indicated where he had concealed the objects stolen.

You see, brethren, what a fearful judgment was decreed upon the man who presumed to violate the church of God's saint by theft. I beseech you, therefore, to keep your manner of life pure in this house, since God in His clemency will condescend to hear you in every virtuous petition, through the prayers of the apostolic man, St. Clement ; just as we have already told how He heard the prayers of the sick in this same church, and enabled them to return home with the good health that they had long yearned for. Nor need we doubt that just as He deigned visibly to heal

*cf. Prov. 18/3, Vulgate.

their bodily diseases, so also, through the intercession of His saint on our behalf, who rests here in the body and, as we believe, is present in the spirit, He continues daily to attend to the hidden disorders of our souls, if with firm faith and sincere confession we pour out our hearts with tears in that place before the merciful face of Him who in His clemency is quick to pardon if we are not slow to ask. Be His the praise and glory for ever and ever!

(31). Finally, with regard to the blessed Wilgils, who, as we have said, was the father of this holy man: since this history in its first chapter began with him, so in its last it may close by referring to him. The anniversary* of the sacred departure of Wilgils had come, and on that day the good abbot Aldberct, successor of the venerable archbishop, proposed to eat and rejoice with the brothers after the solemnities of the mass and the thanksgiving due to God. In the monastery, however, only two bottles of wine were left; and, one of them having been drunk at the dinner hour, the other was put by for supper. After the even-song in honour of that day, accordingly, the brothers returned to the refectory, and when the sacred readings were over, the said abbot thus addressed the brothers: "It becomes us, venerable fathers, to celebrate the festival days of our venerable fathers with spiritual rejoicing, and to give somewhat more indulgence to our bodies than our usual rigour permits—from motives not of luxury, but of love. Now, if I had anything more in the monastery than this single bottle, which remains to us from the dinner hour, I should in no wise

*Jan. 31, according to Thiofrid in his "Life of Willibrord," but in his Sermon on Wilgils he says Jan. 30.

conceal it from you. Yet God is able, through the prayers of his saints, to cause even this to prove abundant for us, alike to honour them and to gladden ourselves, and to show us, unworthy though we are, the beneficent wonder-working of Him who once, through the benediction of our father, the holy Willibrord, condescended to satisfy forty men from four bottles. Let us drink what we have with rejoicing and in hope. All the brothers drank from the bottle a first and second time ; and yet the attendant found it as full as before. Being told of this, the abbot and the brothers were forward to give thanks to God ; and, doing honour to the divine clemency, they drank that night in all sobriety and gladness as much as they desired. O happy father, who begot such a son, and whom God deemed worthy to have such an heir ; in thee is fulfilled the benediction found in Deuteronomy* Blessed shalt thou be, and blessed shall be the fruit of thy body !

*Deut. 28/3. 4.

Appendix A

Synopsis of Bede's references to Willibrord in the *Ecclesiastical History*

Book iii., chapter 13 : Wilbrord tells Acca (Bishop of Hexham, 709-731) of a miraculous cure wrought in Ireland by means of a relic of King Oswald.

iii. 27 : One of the many Anglo-Saxons who went to Ireland for the sake of study and a stricter monastic life was one Ecgberct, of Rathmelsigi ; such sojourners were provided gratis with their livelihood, and were furnished also with books and free instruction. Ecgberct once, when at the point of death (as he thought) from pestilence, had vowed that, if spared, he would never return to Britain.

v. 9 : Ecgberct desired to preach the Word to the heathen Germans—Frisians, Rugini, Danes, Huns, Old Saxons, and Boructuari—and others. Warned by the visions of a fellow-monk that God meant him to go rather to Iona (not regarded as being in Britain), and there institute the Roman reckoning of Easter, he was finally diverted from his Frisian project by the wreck of the ship he had fitted out. One of his companions, Wictberct, did go to Frisia, but after preaching there two years without success, returned to his monastic seclusion.

v. 10 : Ecgberct resolved to send others to Frisia, and a group of twelve, headed by Wilbrord, crossed the sea, and made their way to Pippin, Duke of the Franks, who had recently conquered the nearer (southern) part of Frisia, and expelled King Rathbed from that district. Pippin sent the missionaries there under his protection ; he bestowed favours on their converts ; their efforts were very successful.

Other two priests, the Black Hewald and the White Hewald, who had also lived in Ireland, went about the same time to the Old Saxons. When about to be taken to a local ruler, however, they were attacked by a crowd of heathens, and martyred. The incensed ruler put the murderers to death, and burned their village. The bodies of the martyrs,

thrown into the Rhine, were miraculously discovered, and were then interred, being afterwards translated by Pippin to Cologne.

v. 11 : Wilbrord, having got Pippin's sanction to work in (southern) Frisia, soon afterwards went to Rome in order to obtain papal authority for his mission, and also to receive relics for the consecration of churches. Pope Sergius (I.) willingly granted his desires. When he had returned to his sphere of labour, the brothers chose one of themselves to act as their bishop, namely Suidbert, whom they then sent to England to be consecrated ; but as the bishop-elect of Kent, Berchtwald, the successor of Theodore, had himself crossed the sea in order to be consecrated (he was in Gaul for a time between July, 692 and August 693), Suidbert went to Mercia, and received his episcopal orders from Wilfrid, then in exile (from his Northumbrian see). Returning to Frisia, he shortly afterwards goes to the Boructuari (Westphalia), where he has considerable success, but is at length driven away by the Old Saxons, who overran the country. He then goes to Pippin, who, at the request of Blithryda (Plectrude), gave him a dwelling in an island of the Rhine called In litore (Kaiserswerth), where he built a monastery, and therein ended his days.

After some years' work in Frisia, Wilbrord was sent by Pippin to Rome in order that he should be consecrated archbishop of the Frisians by Pope Sergius. The ceremony took place in 696 (?), on St. Cecilia's festival (22nd Nov., ?) and in her church, Wilbrord receiving the name Clement. After a stay of fourteen days in the city he returned to Frisia, and Pippin gave him a place for his see in the famous fort of Wiltaburg, or, in the Gallic tongue, Trajectum (Utrecht). He built a church there, converted many by his preaching, and throughout his diocese instituted many churches and some monasteries, also constituting " antistites " (bishops) from amongst those who had originally accompanied or afterwards followed him. Some of these (when Bede wrote, about 731) were now dead, but Wilbrord himself, called Clement, was still alive after having been a bishop for thirty-six years, and was now looking eagerly forward to the heavenly recompense.

Appendix B

St. Willibrord's Calendar and an accompanying Martyrology

The Calendar which was referred to in chap. viii. as containing marginal notes supplying valuable information regarding the date of Willibrord's consecration has now been made accessible to English readers. The original manuscript forms part of a volume now in the Bibliothèque nationale, in Paris, bearing the number 10837, and has been recently published in facsimile as *The Calendar of St. Willibrord*, with a historical and palæographical introduction, a transcription in plain type, and elaborate notes, by H. A. Wilson, M.A., Fellow of Magdalen College, Oxford, forming vol. LV. of the Henry Bradshaw Society's publications (London: Harrison & Sons, 1918). This invaluable document appears to have been drawn up in the monastery of Echternach at some date early in the eighth century; and, besides the festivals of many of the recognised saints and martyrs, contains a number of names less renowned, but associated in some way with Willibrord himself, such as Wilgislus (Wilgils), his father, Pope Sergius I., Suidbert, and others. As bearing upon the life of Willibrord, however, the most important part of the Calendar is the page for November, upon which we find two marginal additions making mention of Willibrord himself by name.

The longer of the two added entries is on the left margin of the page, and may be translated as follows: "In the name of the Lord, Clement Willibrord, in the year six hundred and ninety from the incarnation of Christ, came across the sea to Francea, and, in the name of God, in the year six hundred and ninety-five from the incarnation of the Lord, he, though unworthy, was consecrated bishop in Rome by the Apostolic man, Lord Sergius the Pope; but now, in the name of God, is passing happily through the seven hundred and twenty-eighth year from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The phrase " though unworthy " (*quamvis indignus*) could hardly have been penned by anyone but Willibrord himself, and, as it forms a constituent part of the note, we may confidently regard the entire addition as having been written by him. Besides supplying the precise dates of two outstanding events in his life—his crossing to Frisia (690) and his consecration (695)—it shows us that the Calendar was in his hands in the year 728, and this, together with the fact that the Calendar originated in the early part of the eighth century, and that it contains names specially associated with Willibrord, makes it an almost absolute certainty that it was constructed for him, so that it may well be called " St. Willibrord's Calendar."

The other note appears on the right-hand margin, and consists of the four words *ordinatio domni nostri Clementis*, " Consecration of our Lord Clement." The script of this is noticeably smaller than Willibrord's, though resembling it in general character ; both differ in form from that of the original compiler of the Calendar. The words of the note, in four lines, seem to have been intended to stand opposite the 11th day before the Calends of December, *i.e.*, the 21st of November.

In spite of Bede's distinct statements regarding the date of Willibrord's consecration, viz., that it took place on St. Cecilia's Day, *i.e.*, the 22nd of November, 696, the English editor of the Calendar, as also W. Levison, the latest editor of Alcuin's Vita Willibrordi, accepts the date supplied by these two notes, viz., the 21st of November, 695, each writer pointing out that that particular day was a Sunday, while Levison notes also that in an Echternach Sacramentary of the 11th century the consecration is commemorated on the 21st of November.

In the codex of the Paris National Library containing the Calendar is found also a text of the Hieronymian Martyrology, written by the presbyter Laurentius at Echternach (see chap. xii.) The Martyrology precedes the Calendar, and the two are believed to have been conjoined from a very early date. The author of *The Calendar of St. Willibrord* has done a further good service to all who are

nterested in the missionary-saint by adding to his twelve facsimile pages of the Calendar a thirteenth, taken from the Martyrology. This extra page presents a portion of the November matter ; but its importance from our point of view is that it bears on its left margin two later insertions referring to Willibrord. Thus at the seventh before the Ides is written *hic domnus apostolicus vir Willibrordus episcopus migravit ad Christum* (This day our lord bishop, the apostolic man Willibrord, departed to Christ) ; and at the fourth, *hic translatio eiusdem sancti Willibrordi* (This day the translation of the same St. Willibrord). The days noted are, on our reckoning, the 7th and the 10th of November respectively, and as the former date is part of a fairly consistent Echternach tradition, we accept it—as against Alcuin, who gives the 6th—as the day of Willibrord's death. The " translatio " of the 10th November may possibly signify his burial, but we cannot be certain, for the usual word for " burial " is " depositio," while " translatio " generally denotes the removal of a saint's body or relics from one place to another.

Appendix C

The principal dates in Willibrord's life

The guiding dates for a chronology of Willibrord's life are, as we have just seen, 690, his going to the Continent, and 695, his consecration. We accept the latter all the more readily because Bede himself, writing, it is believed, in 731, says that Willibrord had then been a bishop for 36 years, a period that carries us back to 695. After what has been said in the text (chap. viii.) and the foregoing appendix, we do not require to discuss the date of consecration any further.

Alcuin gives no objective date in Willibrord's life, but states the year of his age at a few points. Thus (chap. 4) when Willibrord left Ripon for Ireland he was in his 20th year ; in Ireland he remained 12 complete years ; he left Ireland for Frisia (chap. 5) in his 33rd year (having reached

" the full age of Christ "). Moreover, in Alcuin's metrical " Life of Willibrord " (chap. 24), we have his age at death stated in the following periphrastic fashion :—

Bis octena pius conplevit lustra sacerdos
Ter quater et menses, mensis iam iamque Novembri
Idibus octenis coeli migravit ad aulam.

This gives us ($2 \times 8 \times 5$ years$+3 \times 4$ months$=$) 81 years complete ; the day of his death, as in the prose life, is the 6th November.

We can now approximately fix the date of his birth. If he was in his 33rd year in 690, he must have been born not later than 658, and possibly towards the end of 657.

Thus also, if we add 81 and a fraction to the year of his birth, we obtain 739 as the year of his death. This agrees closely with the witness of Boniface, who says that Willibrord preached in Frisia for 50 years—a round number for 49. The main Echternach tradition—Thiofrid, Catalogues of the Echternach abbots, and Theoderic—also favours 739.

As regards the day of his death, the oldest texts of Alcuin give the 6th of November. The entry in the Martyrology noted in the foregoing appendix, however, indicates the 7th of November, and, according to the testimony of Thiofrid, the commemoration of his death was observed at Echternach on that day, which appears also in several MSS. of Alcuin's *Vita* from the 12th century.

The following table shows these results :—

657-658, Willibrord's birth.
677, goes to Ireland.
690, goes to Frisia.
695 (21st Nov.), is consecrated archbishop.
739 (7th Nov.), his death ; 10th Nov., interment (?).

Appendix D

The Willibrord Tradition

Alberdingk Thijm reports that in his day there were 58 churches in Holland, and 17 in Belgium, dedicated to St. Willibrord, besides a few called " St. Clement's." The German translator says that the diocese of Münster has six bearing the name " Willibrord," and four that of " Clement " ; Paderborn has two. Echternach has a St. Willibrord's Basilica. Professor Comes, Echternach, informs the writer that Willibrord is a very common Christian name in the district. A brief German Life of the Saint, with litanies, etc., is much in use there.

Echternach commemorates its famous Abbot by what is called the " Dancing Procession " on the Tuesday after Whitsunday every year. Thousands of people take part in it, some dancing, some singing, some engaging in a prayer ritual, and thousands more come from the surrounding district as spectators. The celebration can be traced back—with some breaks—for centuries, but no one seems able to say how it came originally to be connected with Willibrord, or how indeed it originated at all.

Bibliography

THIOFRID, abbot of Echternach (1083-1110), tells us that the " Life of Willibrord " was first written by an unlearned Scot (*i.e.*, Irishman) in a rude and undignified style. This has entirely disappeared except in so far as Alcuin may have used it as a source or as a ground-plan for his own work.

Alcuin, the writer of the *Life* translated in the present work, was born at York in 735, and became master of the Cathedral School there in 778 ; in 782 he became head of Charlemagne's school at Aix-la-Chapelle ; in 796 he removed to Tours, where he rendered still further service to the cause of education ; he died in 804. His *Vita Willibrordi* was written at the request of Beornrade, archbishop of Sens, and abbot of Echternach (died 797), and its prologue is addressed to him. Alcuin wrote the life of Willibrord also in hexameter verse ; in this, however, he adds nothing of importance to the materials given in the prose work except a note of the missionary's age at death (Appendix C.) The metrical life was intended to be read in the monastic schools ; the prose one in public worship. The latter, accordingly, is more of a homily than a biography, and, besides being rhetorical and often turgid, is frequently at fault both in syntax and in grammar. The prose *Life* is extant in numerous MSS., a few of which are to be found in the British Museum, London. Certain of the oldest texts now in Stuttgart, St. Gall, Würzburg, and Paris, are regarded as amongst the best.

Of printed editions that of Frobenius, *Alcuini Opera*, II. (Ratisbon, 1777), gathers the results of virtually all its predecessors, and gives Mabillon's various readings in the margin of the prose life : this has been reprinted in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, CI. (Paris, 1851). Modern critical editions are : W. Wattenbach, in *Bibliotheca rerum Germanicarum*, VI. (Berlin, 1873), both lives ; E. Dümmler, *MGH., Poetarum Latinorum medii aevi* I., Berlin, 1880 (metrical Life) : A. Poncelet, *Acta Sanctorum*, November, vol. III., Brussels, 1910 (both Lives) ; W. Levison,

MGH., Scriptores rerum merovingicarum, VII., Hannover and Leipzig, 1920 (prose). The modern editions are all furnished with prefaces.

Translations of the prose life have been published by W. Wattenbach, *Geschichtschreiber der deutschen Vorzeit*, vol. XIV., Leipzig, 1888 (German), and C. Barthélemy, *Les Vies des tous les saints de France*, vol. IX., Versailles, 1868 (French). Both omit several chapters at the end.

Thiofrid,mentioned at the outset as abbot of Echternach, followed Alcuin's example by writing both a prose and a metrical life of Willibrord. He keeps very close to Alcuin's work, but adds matter from Bede, from lives of other saints, and from the Echternach charters ; complete text in I. Schmitz, *Vita Sancti Willibrordi a Thiofrido conscripta*, Luxembourg, 1898, and a German translation in *Ons Hémecht*, V. and VI., do., 1899-1900.

A third Life of W., by a presbyter called Echebert, is simply Alcuin's prose Life with modifications at the beginning and the end.

Of modern works dealing with Willibrord the most frequently cited is the monograph of Alberdingk Thijm, vol. I. of his *Geschiedenis der Kerk in de Nederlanden*, 1861 ; German tr., *Der Heilige Willibrord, Apostel der Nederlande*, Münster, 1863. Useful only as giving very fairly the facts known down to *c.* 1860 ; dominated by prejudice against the Pippins, whom the author believes to have been constantly intriguing against the Roman See and thus against Willibrord ; every act of the rulers is interpreted on that theory ; the book is overloaded with extraneous matter.

Another work sometimes cited is J. H. A. Ebrard, *Die iroschottische Missionskirche*, Gütersloh, 1873. In this book too, the Mayors of the Palace are the villains of the piece ; here, however, their governing aim is to bring Western Europe under the Papal power, and to this purpose Willibrord, as originally a Culdee, has unwillingly to yield his independence ; evidence adverse to this view is simply denied.

Special articles on Willibrord are found in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, *Dictionary of National Biography*,

Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche (A. Hauck), and most similar books of reference. Accounts of his work are given in most important books of ecclesiastical or general history treating of the early Middle Ages, as, *e.g.*, Rettberg, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, II., p. 517 *ff.*; Hauck, *Kircheng. Deutschl.*, I., 3rd ed., p. 433 *ff.*; Von Richthofen, *Untersuchungen über Friesische Rechtsgeschichte*, II., 1, 1882, p. 348 *ff.*; Cambridge Medieval History, II., pp. 128, 535 *f.*, 697; Robinson, *Conversion of Europe*, p. 333 *ff.* See also a brief sketch in the Introduction to *The Calendar of St. Willibrord* (*cf.* Appendix B.)

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